



Department of  
Primary Industries and  
Regional Development

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# Abalone viral ganglioneuritis

Help protect Western Australia



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# What is abalone viral ganglioneuritis (AVG)?

- AVG is a viral disease affecting the nervous system of abalone resulting in weakness and death of the shellfish.
- AVG is not known to occur in Western Australian waters. If introduced into Western Australia (WA), AVG could have a severe impact on WA's important commercial, recreational and aquaculture abalone sectors.
- To prevent introduction of AVG into WA, the import of live abalone into WA from Victoria and other States is not permitted and it's illegal to use abalone as fishing bait in WA.
- AVG only affects abalone species and there are no known effects on human health.

## AVG in Australia

- AVG has previously been reported in abalone from Victoria and Tasmanian waters where it is known to occur in the wild.
  - AVG is expected to re-occur intermittently in these jurisdictions.

## What are the signs of AVG in abalone?

- You may see patches of weak and/or dead abalone that are easily removed from or fall off the reef and which cannot right themselves.
- There may be clusters where there are only empty shells present.
- In some abalone you may see:
  - swelling of the mouth parts; and/or
  - edges of the foot curling inwards, leading to exposure of clean shiny shell.

# How to identify infected abalone



Healthy greenlip abalone. There is no evidence of any protruding mouth parts or foot curl in this healthy abalone.



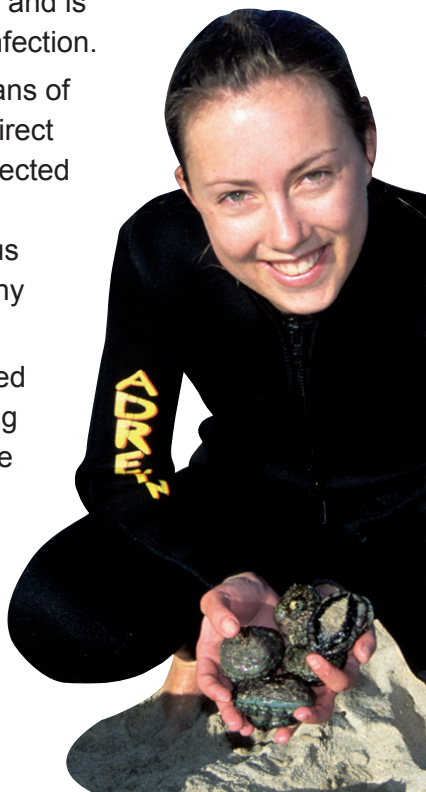
Greenlip abalone showing symptoms of the disease – note swollen and protruding mouth parts and the curled foot margins exposing bare shell beneath.

# If you see any sick abalone:

- Contact FISHWATCH on **1800 815 507**  
– 24 hours/seven days a week.
- You may be asked to collect some whole abalone in a sealed plastic bag or container and record the exact location where the samples were collected.
- Refrigerate but do not freeze any samples.
- Stop diving and don't move to another dive-site – this could spread the disease. Return to land and carry out the cleaning procedures outlined in this brochure.

## How is AVG spread?

- The virus only survives a short time in the water column and is easily killed by disinfection.
- The most likely means of disease spread is direct contact between infected abalone or abalone product (offal, mucus or shells) and healthy abalone.
- It may also be carried on all kinds of fishing equipment or people who have come into contact with infected abalone.



# What can you do to protect WA from AVG?

- Keep a close watch for signs of the disease and report any signs even if you are not sure.
- Do not move abalone between locations, including shells and offal.
- Abalone shell, meat and gut should not:
  - be removed from their shell (shucked) at sea;
  - be dumped into the sea; or
  - be used as fishing bait (it is illegal to use abalone as bait).
- Take your whole catch home and dispose of the waste and shell with your household rubbish.
- Keep your fishing gear, dive gear and boat clean and disinfected. By thoroughly cleaning surfaces and removing organic material that may harbour the virus you can prevent the spread of many aquatic diseases and marine pests.
  - Wash gear thoroughly – wash wetsuits with a wetsuit wash preparation (available from dive and surf shops) and freshwater, or with a mild soap or shampoo. Tanks, buoyancy vests, regulators and masks that have not come in contact with abalone can be washed down with soap-free freshwater. Equipment that has come into contact with abalone (catch bags, gloves, dive knives and measuring devices) should be soaked in soapy freshwater for 30 minutes and then rinsed. All equipment should be allowed to dry (preferably in the sun) before re-use.
  - Wash boats thoroughly with freshwater and detergent away from the shore. Use of specialized detergents produces good results

but any detergent will do. If you can't wash your boat at home use a car wash or service station with washdown facilities.

- Wash hands and clothes – all people that have contact with abalone should wash their hands with soap and water. Spray waterproof clothing with soapy freshwater and rinse, leave in the sun to dry. Wash all other clothing in laundry detergent.

## Abalone in WA

Western Australia has one of the few remaining sustainable abalone fisheries in the world. Each year close to 20,000 recreational fishers take out a licence to fish for abalone. WA waters also support an important commercial abalone fishery and a developing abalone aquaculture industry.

### Important disclaimer

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