

FACTSHEET No. 2

METHODS OF TRAPPING

Lobsters are caught in traps, and any trap lost is considered to be 'ghost' fishing.

There are four types of trap:

1: Parlour pots and 2: the pot lock – these are sophisticated traps from which it is difficult for the shellfish to escape, as they have one or sometimes two inner chambers.

3: Creel and 4: Inkwell pots – these are more traditional types and easier for escape.

At present an estimated minimum of 92,500 traps are lost a year in Maine, USA, an annual traploss of 5% of the 1,850,000 traps fished. If each trap contains 2 lobsters and remains intact for 2 years, then 185,000 traps could be 'ghost' fishing at any one time. This means therefore that approximately 370,000 animals are trapped and die from hunger, cannibalism or adverse climate conditions (ie, if washed up on a beach). It is essential, therefore, that 'ghost' trap escape panels should be fitted to all types of traps. This is a legal requirement for lobsters in Maine, USA. Although the motive in Maine is conservation of stocks, the idea should be taken up on humane grounds and be extended to all shellfish. However, escape from any trap is difficult, so it is essential that the fitted timed mechanism should have a much shorter release time than the 60-90 days mentioned in the Maine Report (see sources), which relies on the process of biodegradation of various researched materials for release. A solution could be an electrically or mechanically controlled timing device.

Crabs:

These are also often caught in pot traps, but may also be caught in nets. There is a problem here of mutilation of undersized crabs, since crab claws may become detached accidentally while clearing a trammel or gill net, and article 2 of the Crab Claws (Prohibition of Landing) Order 1986 permits the landing of claws accidentally detached in this way. Although the Order prohibits the landing within the UK of a claw which has been purposely detached from an edible crab caught within the British fishery limits, it is not always easy to determine whether this has happened accidentally or due to mutilation, aimed at selling the claws as a separate delicacy. The Cornwall Sea Fisheries District has a 'Parts of Crab' By-law 1996 which states that 'no person shall remove from a fishery any part of an edible crab (*Cancer pagururus*) or a spider crab (*Maia squinado*) which is detached from the body of the crab' except where '(a) the total of such parts is not more than 10% by weight of all protected species (ie those species subject to a minimum landing size) landed by the same person on one occasion or, (b) the crab was caught in a trammel, gill, tangle net or other enmeshing net and the claw detached from the crab in the course of clearing the net.' These rules are enforced by the local Sea Fisheries Committee.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and food (MAFF, now DEFRA) has stated that the UK will continue to press for inclusion of a similar provision in the EU technical conservation regulations.

Shellfish general:

Many other species of shellfish are also caught in the traps or nets, and it is to be hoped that the UK will include all forms of shellfish in any legislation or guidelines under discussion.

Sources:

1. South Devon & Channel Shellfishermen Ltd, Kingsbridge, South Devon 1997.
2. State of Maine Dept. of Marine Resources. J.S. Krouse 1988.
3. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. (now Dept. of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, DEFRA).