

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 14, 2005
TO: Division of Shellfish Sanitation Staff
FROM: Robert E. Croonenberghs, Ph.D., Director
Division of Shellfish Sanitation
SUBJECT: Relay "Purging" Standard



Purpose

To define the protocol observed which defines the acceptable conditions for relaying of shellfish in Virginia.

Introduction

The Division of Shellfish Sanitation (DSS) defines the acceptable environmental conditions allowed for relaying shellfish based on documentation found in the Code of Virginia (§ 28.2-816) and the ISSC Model Ordinance, 2003 edition, pages 51-54. As documented in the Code, enforcement of the relaying of shellfish from condemned waters falls under the supervision of the Commissioner of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) in coordination with the Health Commissioner. The season for relaying of shellfish is from April 1 to November 1 on leased private grounds and from May 1 to August 15 on public grounds. VMRC may change the opening and closing date, but there has to be acceptable environmental conditions to allow shellfish to depurate before removal and final harvesting. The Division of Shellfish Sanitation, in conjunction with scientist at the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences (VIMS), has developed a purging standard for relaying shellfish in the Commonwealth.

Policy

Recognizing the time period defined in the ISSC Model Ordinance, the Division of Shellfish Sanitation defines a 15-day time period of continual water temperatures in excess of 50 degrees Fahrenheit to be acceptable for relaying in Virginia. The official water sampling temperature station is found at the VIMS dock in Gloucester Point. If at any time, the water temperature drops below the fifty degree mark, the fifteen-day period shall restart. VMRC will not allow the removal of relayed shellfish on day 16 if that day is a weekend. However, relay removal of shellfish is allowed if day 16 is a holiday. In the autumn, VMRC closes the relay season under their regulations.

These conditions constitute what is routinely called the "Purging Standard" of relaying shellfish in Virginia and is recognized by the Health Department's Division of Shellfish Sanitation and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission..