

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 13, 1988

TO: Division of Shellfish Sanitation Staff

THROUGH: Eric H. Bartsch, P.E., Director  
Office of Water Programs

FROM: Cloyde W. Wiley, Director  
Division of Shellfish Sanitation

SUBJECT: Crustacea Plants - Interplant Transportation of Cooked Crab Claws

On February 11, 1971, a letter was sent to the Virginia crab meat industry setting forth the procedures for the interplant transportation of cooked crab claws. This letter was reissued to Division staff on May 14, 1988 as a result of flagrant violation of the established procedures.

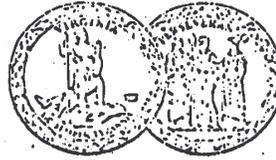
Although this practice is now a limited operation by a few dealers, it is necessary that the previously established procedure be rigidly followed to prevent product quality loss and assure public health protection. Since some of the staff may be unaware of the established procedure, the attached 1971 industry letter is now reissued as a working memo.

Accordingly, please see that all of these procedures are adhered to, effective immediately.

CWW:JAH/teb

Attachments

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA



MACK I. SHANHOLTZ, M. D.  
COMMISSIONER

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
RICHMOND, VA. 23219

February 11, 1971

Gentlemen:

The Virginia State Health Department has conditionally approved the inter-plant shipment and subsequent mechanical processing of cooked crab claws. A good deal of research and planning has been given to the development of acceptable sanitary methods for handling and utilizing cooked crab claws. Of primary concern is the establishment of a practical and economical method of handling this product consistent with public health practices that will assure the marketing of a wholesome product.

The utmost cooperation of those individuals and dealers participating in this operation is essential. The items listed below are considered minimum guidelines to be used by participants. However, changes or modifications will probably have to be made to the procedures as experience indicates. To assure the continued production of a quality product with adequate consumer protection, the Virginia State Health Department is strongly of the opinion that to make this system work, the following items must be effected and maintained daily when handling and processing cooked crab claws:

1. Cooked crab claws shall be detached from crab bodies at picking tables while processing body meats or other appropriate place approved by the Health Department.
2. Claws shall be placed in a standard picking pan by the pickers or directly into a larger storage container.
3. When picking pan is full of claws, it shall be emptied immediately into a previously sanitized container used for storage or transport. Claws in the storage containers shall be picked up on a rotation basis by an assigned employee and stored in the cooked crab refrigeration room. This procedure is necessary in order to get the claws under refrigeration as soon as possible.
4. All claws shall be stored under refrigeration at 40°F. or below within one hour after picking from the crab bodies at the producing plant.

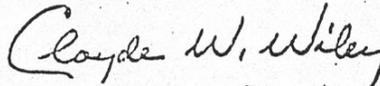
5. Plants participating in this operation shall have refrigeration capacity and facilities adequate to hold cooked claws at 40°F. or below.
6. Only approved type "white Rubbermaid" containers or equivalent of the 20-gallon size or smaller with tops are to be used. The use of plastic liners in inferior type containers is not approved for this operation.
7. Sufficient quantities of proper storage containers shall be obtained and put into service so that twice the number used daily are available.
8. Cooked crab claw containers shall be identified with the name of the feeder plant.
9. Adequate washing and sanitizing vats or facilities to handle the 20 gallon containers must be provided at the feeder plant as well as the mechanical processing plant. Separate washing and sanitizing facilities are necessary which are capable of completely submerging the crab claw containers.
10. Claw storage containers as emptied at processing plants shall be washed and sanitized.
11. Sanitized containers to be used for storing and transporting cooked crab claws must not be nested prior to or during any phase of filling, holding, storing, refrigerating, or transporting. Nesting of containers would contaminate the product and retard circulation during refrigeration.
12. All hauling of claws by dealers shall be done in an enclosed truck. Claws shall be shipped in the storage containers with tight fitting lids. If claws are in transit for more than one hour, adequate refrigeration must be provided. The temperature of claws shall not exceed 40°F. in transit.
13. Cooked crab claws shipped interplant for mechanical processing are to become the property of the plant in which the processing is done and marketed under that plant's certification. Mechanically picked crab meat is not to be returned to the feeder plant unless the packing container is adequately labelled with correct identification, such as packed by: (name, address, and certification number of mechanical processing plant) or packed for: (name & address) along with the certification number of the mechanized processing plant on the containers. Packed crab meat shall not be repacked.
14. Cooked crab claws shall be collected from the feeder plants daily by the mechanical processor.
15. Cooked crab claws shall be processed within 24 hours after delivery to the mechanical processing plant.
16. The mechanical processing plant shall keep records of all purchases of cooked crab claws.
17. This process is approved only for cooked crab claws produced in Virginia by certified dealers. No out-of-state shipments of cooked crab claws for processing shall be received.

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Should your plant elect to handle cooked crab claws for interplant shipments, your cooperation in explicitly carrying out the conditions enumerated above is essential if the operation is to be successful. In the event it is found the system is unworkable as a result of inability to adhere to the above requirements, approval for the interplant shipment of cooked crab claws will be withdrawn. It should be understood approval for this operation is conditional and will be revised or withdrawn as necessary.

If you have any question about this procedure or I can be of assistance to you in any way regarding its adoption, please let me know.

Sincerely yours,



Cloyde W. Wiley, Director  
Bureau of Shellfish Sanitation