



Environment
Agency

Stop

the spread of alien crayfish and crayfish plague



What are alien crayfish?

Alien crayfish are not native to Britain; North American signal crayfish (*above right*) are the commonest of four species that have invaded our rivers. They are now widespread throughout much of England and Wales. North West rivers are some of the last free of these invaders and are a refuge for the rare native white-clawed crayfish.

How do they get here?

Many have escaped from crayfish farms but they have been intentionally and illegally introduced as a food source. Crayfish & crayfish plague can also be introduced accidentally during fish stocking, as bait for anglers and during other water based activities.

Why are they a problem?

Signal crayfish carry the deadly crayfish plague which kills native white-clawed crayfish (*below*). They also prey on native crayfish and out-compete them for food and habitat and can wipe out native fish stocks. They now occupy 80% of rivers in England and Wales and will devastate North West rivers if not stopped.



Warning: It is a criminal offence to release or allow to escape into the wild signal and other non-native crayfish species without a licence

The crayfish code

How can you help?

Do not introduce alien crayfish

It is a criminal offence to release or allow to escape, signal and other non-native crayfish species into the wild anywhere in England and Wales without a licence.

Do not trap or remove crayfish

It is an offence to trap and remove any crayfish (native or non-native) in the North West of England without a license.

Never use crayfish as bait

It is an offence under national fisheries byelaws to use any crayfish (dead or alive) or any crayfish part as bait.

Disinfect and dry equipment

Crayfish plague spores have been spread on damp equipment such as fishing tackle, canoes and machinery.

Do not move between rivers or water bodies without either disinfecting (iodine based disinfectant) or washing (clean tap water) then drying completely any equipment that has been in contact with river or lake water.

Protect native crayfish habitat

Native crayfish and their habitat are protected by law. Always seek advice from the environment agency before carrying out works in or near a watercourse.

Report sightings

If you see any signal crayfish or anyone in possession of, or attempting to trap, release or sell live crayfish; please report it to the Environment Agency immediately.

These preventative measures will help to contain the further spread of alien crayfish and crayfish plague to conserve our remaining native crayfish and fish populations. For further information or advice please call us.

Environment Agency Hotline 0870 8506506
Ask for the Fisheries, Recreation & Biodiversity Team
www.environment-agency.gov.uk