



Bitter Crab

IDENTIFYING AND HANDLING

Bitter Crab Disease (BCD) is caused by a microscopic blood parasite. The disease is mostly found in recently molted crabs (soft-shelled or new-hard-shelled) and it kills them within a year. Although it is harmless to humans, it causes the meat to taste 'bitter'.



The crabs on the left are infected with BCD. Note the opaque white and pink appearance on the underside as well as the orange in the joints. The meat is severely degraded in these heavily infected animals.

Identifying Bitter Crab

The bitter crab has a 'cooked' appearance. It is a ghostly or dead-looking white. Legs are opaque white but in early stages, they may show white streaks on the translucent underside.

The usually red-brown back may have a pink or orange tint.



Bitter crab with cooked appearance.

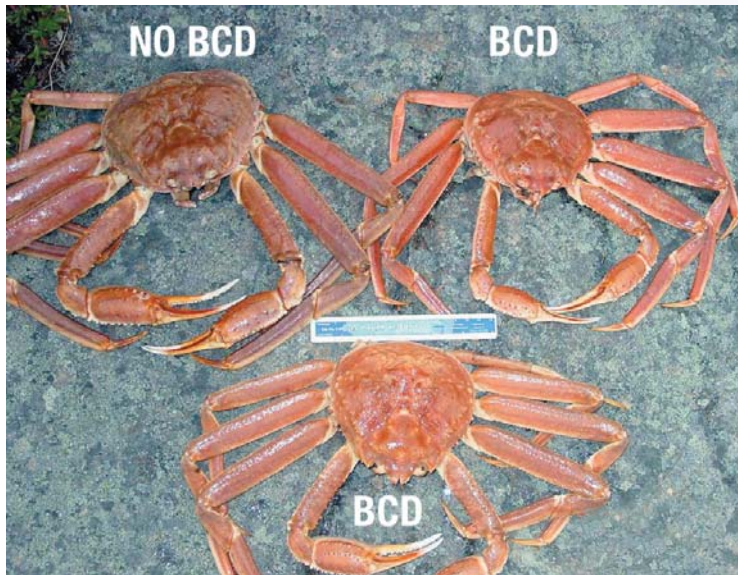


Good crab vs. bitter crab with milky blood coming from the claws.

BCD:

- *Is fatal to crabs but harmless to humans*
- *Can contribute to the decline of the commercial crab stocks*
- *Affects market quality of crabs*



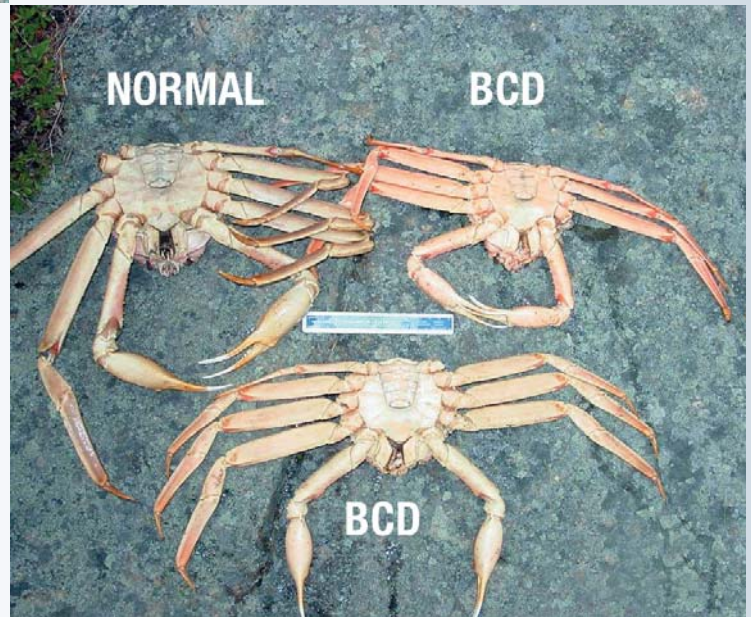


Healthy crabs are browner in appearance than bitter crabs, which are more orange in color.

Infected crabs may have drooping limbs and mouthparts, cloudy or milky-white blood and when cooked, the meat has a chalky texture and a bitter after-taste.



Joints are orange in color and milky blood can be seen in the claws.



Bitter crabs are pinkish orange on the underside and around their joints.



Note the orange color in the joints.



Interior of bitter crab.



Bitter crab with shell (carapace) removed.

Handling

In order to prevent the spread of disease:

- *Don't throw bitter crab back into the ocean.*
- *Remove them from the catch for disposal ashore.*
- *Keep them in a sealed container until landed and then send them to a landfill.*

Note: Bitter crabs are not counted against Individual Quotas.

To find out more about bitter crab, please visit:

http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/csas/Csas/publications/ResDocs-DocRech/2001/2001_086_e.htm