

## HANDLING AND PROCESSING OF LIVE OYSTERS

*Vibrio parahaemolyticus* (Vibrio) is a naturally occurring bacteria present in the ocean. When ocean temperatures rise in the warmer months, levels of Vibrio increase in the ocean and in oysters. When Vibrio is present and oysters are stored at improper temperatures, Vibrio levels increase resulting in oysters that are unsafe to eat if consumed raw or undercooked.

As an industry participant, you have an important role to play in ensuring seafood (including live oysters) is safe for public consumption. This notice is intended to assist you by ensuring that you are aware of your responsibilities under the [Fish and Seafood Act](#):

- [Duty to ensure food safety](#) – provincially licensed operators must ensure that seafood is safe to eat.
- [Duty to report unsafe food](#) – provincially licensed operators who believe that seafood may be unsafe for human consumption are required to report such instances.
- [Duty to obtain oysters from a federally-licensed processor](#) – provincially licensed seafood processors must not receive oysters for processing unless they have been previously processed by a federally-licensed processor.
- [Duty to ensure oysters received are properly tagged](#) – provincially licensed seafood processors must not receive oysters for processing unless they are tagged according to the [Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program](#) (see 11.3.4 Traceability).
- [Duty to comply with temperature requirements](#) – provincially licensed operators must ensure that seafood is maintained at the required temperature. To ensure this:
  - Check the temperature of all incoming and outgoing shipments of oysters from your facility.
  - Immediately refrigerate oysters at 4°C or colder.
  - Check cooler temperature regularly, and record temperature at least once daily.
  - If oysters are wet-stored, keep at 4°C or colder.
  - Properly transport oysters in refrigerated trucks that can maintain the product temperature at 4°C or colder.

- [Duty to comply with regulatory requirements](#) – provincially licensed operators must comply with regulatory requirements including, but not limited to:
  - [Construction requirements](#)
  - [Washrooms and handwashing](#)
  - [Sanitation](#)
  - [Hygiene](#)
  - [Illnesses](#)
  
- [Duty to maintain records](#) (Seafood Processors) – provincially licensed seafood processors must keep records for each delivery of seafood product received and subsequently distributed. This record-keeping is essential to reconcile and enable traceability of all oysters from suppliers to customers.
  
- [Duty to maintain records](#) (Fish Receivers) – provincially licensed fish receivers must keep records for each delivery of seafood product received and subsequently distributed. This record-keeping is essential to reconcile and enable traceability of all oysters from suppliers to customers.

For additional information or if you have any questions, please contact Stella Lukman, Food Safety and Quality Specialist by [email](#) or phone (778) 866-5287.