Shellfish High Health Program Guideline

A Voluntary Program for Producers of Live Shellfish

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1.0 PURPOSE OF THE SHELLFISH HIGH HEALTH PROGRAM GUIDELINES

These Shellfish High Health Program guidelines are provided for producers of live shellfish larvae, seed, broodstocks or other products that are transported and placed in receiving waters.

Implementation of a Shellfish High Health Program by an individual producer is voluntary, and is based upon regular surveillance of shellfish health, ongoing health documentation and the use of procedures that promote shellfish health.

The purpose of implementing such a program for individual shellfish producers and general shellfish transport is to:

- prevent the dissemination of certifiable infectious shellfish diseases shellfish products,
- increase and maximize production efficiency by proactive health management,
- facilitate the process of obtaining import permits for live shellfish products from governments of importing countries or states, and
- ensure free flow of healthy broodstocks, larvae and seed between health certified production facilities and participating countries by meeting or exceeding shellfish health regulatory requirements

We expect that the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association (PCSGA) Shellfish High Health Program guidelines to be endorsed by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA is the federal agency responsible for negotiating the terms of bilateral trade agreements with trading partners of the United States in regard to live animal products. Under such agreements, the USDA is recognized by foreign governments as the competent authority to provide assurance of health certification for US export products. Such certification ensures that producers will have access to markets in countries or trading blocks with established trade agreements with the US. In addition, such certification should facilitate interstate transfer of live shellfish stocks to be placed in receiving waters.

The Shellfish High Health Program guidelines will be reviewed periodically by PCSGA to ensure that the guidelines meet the Association's goals for health shellfish.

2.0 Components and Implementation of a Shellfish High Health Program

2.1 *Participating producers*

PCSGA will maintain a list of voluntary participants in its Shellfish High Health Program. It will be the responsibility of the individual producers to establish their own Shellfish High Health Program using these guidelines and to establish approval of their program and stocks by the USDA.

2.2 *Health certifications, records and documentation*

Participating shellfish producers will maintain an ongoing historical record of the health of its shellfish, based on regular health examinations. These records will establish a documented free of significant disease history which is the basis of qualifying as an exporter to many countries and states.

2.3 *Examination for certifiable shellfish diseases*

In the US, certifiable or reportable shellfish diseases are specified by state governments. Recommendations may be provided by federal agencies and international advisory bodies such as the Office International des Epizooties (OIE). The required frequency of shellfish health examinations is specified in some states in which members of the PCSGA operate. In addition, the sampling sensitivity (number of shellfish that need to be sampled and frequency of sampling to establish a specific pathogen free certification) may be similarly specified. While OIE is provides international guidance, state may also implement specific precautions.

For example, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) may restrict or prohibit imports or transfers into receiving waters located in Washington due to presence of diseases not currently listed by OIE as notifiable or reportable. For example, OshV-1 is not currently OIE listed as notifiable or reportable but OsHV-1 microvariant is reportable as an “emerging disease.” WDFW considers both OsHV-1 and microvariant as cause for implementing a regulatory response and preventative measures. A regulatory response and preventative measures may be initiated by detection anywhere within the West Coast Commerce Region and Hawaii. The same would be true of any disease WDFW determines to be a threat to Washington shellfish resources, fisheries and aquaculture.

The ability to transport live shellfish to specific foreign countries may be dependent on meeting shellfish health certification requirements negotiated with that country or trading block by the competent authority of the United States (APHIS of the USDA).

2.4 *Broodstock Management*

A key objective of the Shellfish High Health Program is the protection of broodstock holding areas to maintain their health status and to prevent the introduction of exotic infectious diseases to these areas. A broodstock health management program must have the following components.

2.4.1 *Dedicated areas*

Dedicated areas will be selected to minimize any potential means of accidental introduction of infectious shellfish diseases. Dedicated areas will be used for broodstock maintenance. Each cultured species of shellfish must be held in a defined and localized area clearly demarcated for broodstock and not used for other purposes.

2.4.2 *Limited entry*

Entry of any new cultured animal stocks to broodstock holding areas is very limited and managed very conservatively. Any proposed shellfish introductions to the broodstock holding area or to a location close enough to the broodstock holding area to present a risk of disease transfer into the holding area must have a free of significant disease health history and undergo a certification evaluation, consistent with applicable regulatory requirements and company policy.

2.4.3 *Ongoing health surveillance*

A program of ongoing health characterization and evaluation is conducted for each for each broodstock holding area consisting of regular health certification of broodstock in these areas.

2.4.4 *Health records*

An historical log of health certification and surveillance records is maintained for each broodstock holding area.

3.0 HATCHERY AND NURSERY OPERATIONS PROTOCOLS

Hatchery and nursery production facilities producing exported shellfish must be managed to exclude certifiable infectious diseases. A program of health management to accomplish this goal will include the following components.

3.1 *Significant disease free water sources*

Hatchery and nursery facilities and broodstock holding areas must be operated in or use waters free of certifiable shellfish diseases. Sea water disinfection systems may be used to accomplish the goal of a disease free water source.

3.2 *Integrity of broodstocks in the hatchery*

Broodstock must be managed in the hatchery so they do not contact brood or offspring from any uncertified areas or from areas certified to a lower standard. Similar isolation requirements apply to larvae and seed offspring.

3.3 *Operations protocols*

Facilities, at their option, may use health related protocols for the following operations, if needed to maintain freedom from certifiable diseases, or otherwise enhance the health of shellfish stocks.

- Management of primary and expanded algal stocks
- Spawning management of broodstock
- Larval rearing management
- Setting management
- Water quality maintenance
- Disinfection and sanitation procedures
- Infectious disease vector control
- Carcass disposal
- Employee training
- Visitor access

3.4 *Hatchery records related to health management*

Records are maintained that document any control point or operation required to exclude infectious diseases from hatchery stocks.

4.0 Response Plan for Infectious Disease Outbreaks

The Shellfish High Health Program is designed to exclude the introduction of certifiable infectious diseases to areas where shellfish for export are reared. Since infectious diseases can be introduced by natural means or other means outside of the control of a producer, the following response plan is in place in case of a significant infectious disease outbreak. This plan will be put in place if a certifiable disease is found or a new and significant infectious disease occurs with mortality not attributable to non-infectious causes exceeding a rate set by the pertinent regulatory authority. The response plan will consist of the following actions:

A. Confirmation of the infectious disease diagnosis.

B. Required notification of the responsible regulatory authorities of the disease outbreak.

C. Establishment of a disease containment area including containment and/or disinfection procedures to prevent the movement of infected shell stock, equipment and contaminated materials out of the disease affected area.

D. Disinfection of contaminated culture water from any affected hatchery or nursery facilities.

E. Adequate disposal of dead shell to prevent dissemination of infectious disease organisms with such stock.

F. Destruction of infected stocks, if required to contain the disease, or if required by the regulatory authority.

G. Determination of the source of the infectious disease agent, in collaboration with appropriate regulatory agencies, and implementation of a plan to eliminate any continuing source of the disease agent introduction, if needed.

H. Establish a continued monitoring and response plan for the infectious disease and determination of needed continuing action, in conjunction with the appropriate regulatory agency.