

## Consequences of Lobster Handling

In a study conducted from May to July 1997 in Prince Edward Island, a total of 1,672 lobsters from 53 lobster boats coming from 11 different fishing ports were examined and tagged, while fishing and Handling practices were monitored. The tags enabled us to follow and reexamine lobsters at different Handling points in the industry.

There was a significant increase of about 8% in the proportion of lobsters with open wounds or active lesions and a significant increase in the # of weak lobsters (0.5% at the wharf to 3.2% at the processing plants) from the time of capture to the time of arrival at processing plants. Although these differences may appear insignificant, they still represent about 1.8 million lobsters per year in Eastern Canada that were healthy and strong at the time of landing, but had to be downgraded at the processing plants. The majority of the injuries occurred between the time of capture and the time of landing at the wharves,

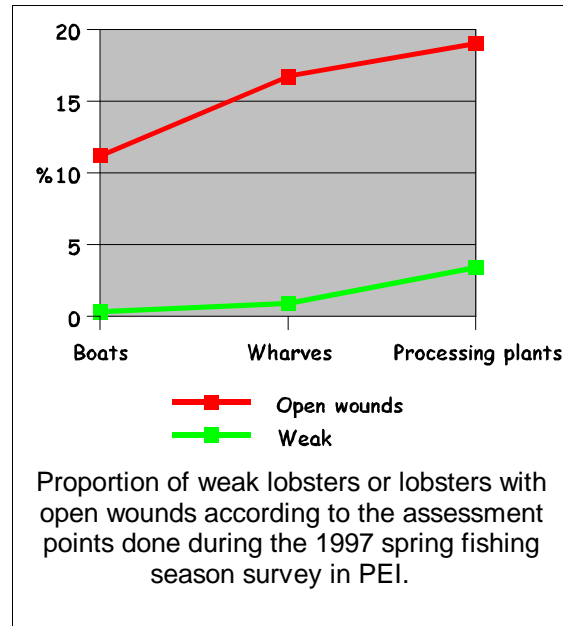
although most of the vigor loss (8 weakness) was between the time of landing and the time of arrival at the processing plants.

Reducing the incidence of injuries is extremely important as gaffkemia ('red tail disease'), a fatal lobster disease, is transmitted through open wounds.

Also, using less care in the overall handling process of lobsters on board the boats resulted in loss of vigour.

**Generally, tossing lobsters made them 3 times more likely to arrive weak at processing plants than lobsters which were gently transferred from traps to temporary storage units on board fishing boats.** Taking

the extra time required to properly manipulate lobsters at every Handling point in the industry will yield a better and stronger product, which in return can only increase its value, and therefore the price paid to fishers, buyers and processors.



- O Lobster fishers, buyers, pound operators and processors should be encouraged to Handle lobsters as gently as possible.*
- O Claw banding of canner-sized lobsters is encouraged, especially on boats where physical contact between market-sized & canner-sized lobsters occurs before measuring or grading.*

