



LFA's 33/34 Moul't & Quality Monitoring Project

~Importance of Quality~

With an increasing number of companies and individual fishermen using blood proteins as an indicator of quality, it is important to keep in mind that several factors can influence blood protein such as water temperature, moult cycle, health, diet, etc. and therefore, caution must be used when making prediction.

Based on the LFA's 33/34 Moul't & Quality Monitoring Project 2009 pre-season sampling, lobsters landed at the start of the season in Southwest Nova Scotia could be of a lower quality compared to what was seen over the last couple of years. While there could be less soft-shell lobsters at the start of the season this year compared to last year, mean blood protein levels could be lower than in previous years.

RECOMMENDATIONS for LOBSTER KEPT in COMMUNAL CRATES / CARS

As a rule of thumb, lobsters kept ***communally in crates or cars*** should not be held for more than approximately 1 week. Beyond that, there is a significant increase in the likelihood of open wounds caused by chewing, resulting in an increased number of stressed, weak and dead lobsters. Surviving lobsters may not be fit for the live trade due to an overall lower quality. If you are measuring blood protein levels in your catch as well as assessing shell hardness, here are some recommendations as to what you can do with your lobsters:

- ~ average Brix over 10 & overall hardshell: should not be held for more than 7-10 days
- ~ average Brix over 10 & overall softshell: should not be held for more than 5-7 days
- ~ average Brix between 8 - 10 & overall hardshell: should not be held for more than 5-7 days
- ~ average Brix between 8 - 10 & overall softshell: should not be held for more than 3-5 days
- ~ average Brix below 8 & overall hardshell: should not be held for more than 1 day
- ~ average Brix below 8 & overall softshell: should not be held in storage at all

These recommendations are just general guidelines. When making decisions on storage time, it is important to remember to take into account the holding system design, water quality as well as product quality and its handling history. When holding product in communal crates/cars for extended periods, it is not uncommon to see little mortality or loss of vigour and lobsters may appear to be strong and healthy. However, these lobsters will likely have missing/chewed up appendages, will likely have lost some blood, and will likely not be fit for live trade, other than at the local level.

Ensuring that only higher quality lobsters are kept for temporary short-term communal storage is paramount for ensuring that handling stress will be tolerated through to the consumer's plate.

When using an individual holding system (tubing) with or without chilled recirculated water, storage time can be significantly extended. Again, care should be taken to ensure that only high quality lobsters are stored in these systems. ***Quality in, quality out.***

For more information, or if you have any concerns regarding the quality of your lobsters, contact Jean Lavallée at 902-628-7981 or jlavallee@upe.ca

