

## IDENTIFICATION

American lobsters are similar to European lobsters in appearance but there are some noticeable differences:

- American lobsters are more stocky in appearance than European lobsters
- Colouration varies but American lobsters are usually green/brown with orange, red, dark green or black speckling, while European lobsters are blue in colour
- The underside of the claws of an American lobster are orange, while those of a European lobster are cream coloured
- American lobsters have one or more spines (*ventral teeth*) on the underside of the 'nose' (*rostrum*), a feature which is absent in European lobsters
- The spines on the rostrum of the American lobster tend to have red tips, while those on the European lobster are white tipped

We especially want to hear about those lobsters not easily identified as they could potentially be hybrids between American and European lobsters.



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

It is legal to land and sell or consume any American lobsters you catch, however it is illegal to release them into the wild in our waters. There is no specific legal requirement to report catches of American lobsters, but the knowledge gained from reports will aid future decision making and policies aimed at protecting our native European lobsters.

## REPORTING

Please report all potential American lobsters or hybrids (offspring of an American lobster and a European lobster) to your local Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) or Marine Management Organisation (MMO) fisheries officers.



# IF YOU CATCH AN AMERICAN LOBSTER RETAIN & REPORT



Reporting American lobsters  
caught in English waters

Protecting native lobster stocks

## WHAT – to look out for...

The American lobster (*Homarus americanus*) originates in the USA and Canada.

Government receives a small number of reports each year that American lobsters are being caught in our waters. These animals cannot cross the Atlantic naturally and therefore have appeared in our waters because people have either deliberately or accidentally put them there. Some American lobsters caught in our waters may be going unreported. We would like to know about all American lobsters caught in our waters to have a true picture of where the animals are, in what quantities and if they are breeding.

## WHY – we need your help...

It is thought that American lobsters could have an impact on our lobster stocks and marine environment.

Evidence shows that American lobsters could introduce diseases, which may spread to other animals. The American lobster may also threaten our own European lobster (*Homarus gammarus*) by taking its food and shelter, in addition to possibly interbreeding. If the number of American lobsters in our waters increases this could have a significant impact on our native lobster fisheries.

## HOW – you can help...

If you think you have caught an American lobster, please contact the local IFCA or MMO fisheries officers

The information we are looking to gather is:

- **Date and location of capture**
- **Photographs of the whole animal, the underside of the claws and the rostrum are minimum required to confirm the report**
- **Sex of the animal**
- **If claws were banded**
- **If it was carrying eggs**
- **Size (weight and/or carapace length)**

Your local IFCA and MMO fisheries officers will assist with collection of this data, visual identification of the animals and advise regarding the species and future of the lobster eg. return to water, requires testing, can be eaten/placed on the market.

## AMERICAN LOBSTER



**Location:**  
Underside claw  
**Distinctions:**  
Orange-red



**Location:**  
Head  
**Distinctions:**  
Spines tipped red  
Ventral tooth present



**Location:**  
Back & neck  
**Distinctions:**  
Larger, orange reddish, dark green or black speckles

## DISTINGUISHING FEATURES



**Location:**  
Underside claw  
**Distinctions:**  
Cream



**Location:**  
Head  
**Distinctions:**  
Spines tipped white  
No ventral tooth



**Location:**  
Back & neck  
**Distinctions:**  
Smaller, blue to dark blue

Occasionally American lobsters find their way into our waters. This poses a risk of disease, outcompeting and interbreeding.

Please keep all potential American lobsters or hybrids and report them asap.

**Report to your local IFCA or MMO fisheries officers**