

Identifying Redclaw Crayfish (*Cherax quadricarinatus*)

This guidance leaflet explains crayfish controls in England and Wales and how to recognise *Cherax quadricarinatus* - the **only** species allowed to be kept as an ornamental animal.

Great Britain's only native crayfish, the white clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*), is endangered and therefore subject to national and international conservation legislation. One of the biggest threats to this species is an introduced species, the signal crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*), which has escaped from many farm sites.

Signal crayfish out-compete our native crayfish and carry a fungal disease, the crayfish plague, which the white clawed crayfish has no defence against. Recognising the threat from signal crayfish, and other species of crayfish, the government introduced legislation, The Prohibition of Keeping of Live Fish (Crayfish) Order 1996. This aims to protect our native crayfish and stop adverse effects of the introduction and release of non-native crayfish.

This legislation made it an offence to keep any crayfish in England and Wales, except under licence. It also stopped the keeping of crayfish as ornamental animals. The only exception is for keeping redclaw crayfish in heated indoor aquaria.

Due to a lack of knowledge of the legislation, or disregard for it, several species of non-native crayfish are still imported or kept. As a consequence, the Fish Health Inspectorate (FHI) and Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) take action to remove crayfish from imported consignments, or seize them from any premises where they are being kept illegally.

All illegal crayfish species should be reported to the Fish Health Inspectorate on 01305 206700 or by email to phi@cefas.co.uk.



Please note: redclaw crayfish are typically blue (as seen here) or as illustrated overleaf. Often they are marketed as blue lobsters.

Redclaw Crayfish (*Cherax quadricarinatus*)

Males have a red patch on the outside of the claw; it becomes more prominent as they age. This specimen shows the typical colouration of this species.

The head has four long and distinct ridges on the top. The inner ridges are longer and typically have three pairs of lateral spines. The ridges come to a distinct point.



There is a single prominent cervical groove between the head and the body. Three distinct spines point out from this groove.

On the underside the Pleopods (swimming limbs) are absent from segment 1 (circled). Between the last pair of back legs there is a distinct triangular spine (triangle).