

Current Research

The Department conducts annual summer and fall crab surveys. During these surveys tens of thousands of Tanner crab are counted, measured, and assessed for infection of BCS. With years of data acquired the department has been able to determine when BCS is high/low in specific locations. The Department also analyzes fishery data to help track the prevalence of BCS in Southeast, Alaska.



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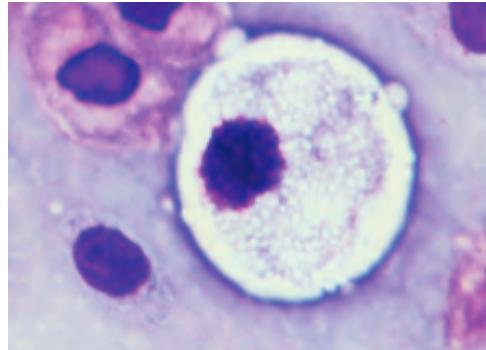
BITTER CRAB SYNDROME

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF
FISH & GAME

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game logo is located in the top right corner. It features a circular design with "ALASKA" at the top and "DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME" around the bottom. Inside the circle is a white background with a red moose standing on a blue wave, and a blue fish swimming below it. Above the moose is a white bird in flight.

What is bitter crab syndrome?

Bitter crab syndrome (BCS) is a disease of Tanner crabs (*Chionoecetes bairdi*) that is caused by a parasitic dinoflagellate of the genus *Hematodinium*.



HOW DO I IDENTIFY BITTER CRAB?

Tanner crab infected with bitter crab disease often show the characteristic of being cooked. Their shells (especially the underneath of the legs) will have an orange to reddish color. This is all dependent on the parasitic load of the crab. If a crab has recently become infected this characteristic may not be as prominent. The tell-tale sign that a crab is infected is when cleaning the crab, the blood and flesh will have a milky look to it.

IS IT SAFE TO EAT?

There is no danger to humans if a crab carrying BCS is consumed. Many people explain the taste of infected crab as unpleasant and similar to chewing on an aspirin.

WHAT IF I CATCH AN INFECTED CRAB?

If you find that you have harvested a legal male Tanner crab infected with BCS and you choose not to consume it, the Department recommends that it is brought back to port and disposed of on land in your local refuse.



Infected crab with opaque orange/red colored legs that look "cooked".



Infected crab with opaque colored legs that appear milky or chalky.



Uninfected crab have semi-translucent colored and are often bright pink from recently molted crab.