



Northern
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Improving gear selectivity in Australian mud crab fisheries

Crab pots are the preferred method for catching mud crabs in most areas of northern Australia.

The proportion of undersized mud crabs in the catch varies a lot and depends on season and location.

Escape vents allow undersized mud crabs and small bycatch species to exit crab pots by themselves.

This in turn reduces damage to, and predation upon, these animals by large mud crabs inside the pot.

It also reduces the number of crabs that are damaged (or die) while on deck or when released.

The use of escape vents may improve the efficiency and productivity of north Australian mud crab fisheries.



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Australian Government
Fisheries Research and
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Field trials tested escape vents in both circular, collapsible polyethylene mesh pots and rigid, galvanised wire mesh pots.

Catch rates of undersized and legal sized mud crabs in “unvented” control pots were compared with those from “vented” treatment pots.

Vented pots were fitted with different numbers and different sizes of escape vents suited to the various size limits used in the NT and QLD.

The use of two escape vents reduced the catch rate of undersized mud crabs by as much as 33% (depending on size limit and location).

The catch rate of legal sized crabs in vented pots was the same or greater than that in unvented pots.

Undersized female mud crabs used escape vents more than undersized males, perhaps because they lack large claws to defend themselves.



For further enquiries contact

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