

Shellfish

Harvesting of Shellfish

Some species of shellfish (live bivalve molluscs), such as oysters, mussels, cockles etc., are filter feeders and accumulate sewage contamination and toxins from the water around them.

Their consumption can cause illness.

To control the risk of illness, live bivalve molluscs (except scallops) being placed on the market for human consumption must originate from a classified production area.

Shellfish Classification

Areas are classified per species according to the degree of contamination, based on monitoring of faecal contamination in the shellfish. Only shellfish from Class A waters can be placed on the market directly.

An annual list of classified areas is published by Food Standards Scotland (FSS). Should you wish to apply for a new area to be classified, please contact [Environmental Health](#) for an application form.

Algal Toxin Monitoring

As well as checking levels of bacteria, FSS monitor the amount of algal toxins in shellfish. Where these exceed the regulatory limits, Temporary Closure Notices, prohibiting the harvesting of shellfish, are issued by Environmental Health.

When a Temporary Closure Notice is served, warning signs are displayed adjacent to the area to warn members of the public not to consume shellfish (including periwinkles) gathered from these areas as a precaution.

Food Standards Scotland Monitoring Programme

More information, including current test results, are available from [Food Standards Scotland](#).

Shellfish Traceability

To ensure traceability of the product, a **registration document** requires to accompany each batch of live shellfish during transportation from the production area to the dispatch or purification centre.

If you wish to gather shellfish from a classified production area within North Ayrshire, please contact [Environmental Health](#) for registration documents.

Operators of approved dispatch/purification centres must ensure shellfish leaving their premises are labelled with an identification mark which includes their unique approval number, before the shellfish can be marketed for human consumption.

Shellfish Exports

If you wish to export shellfish from the UK, you will require to meet the import requirements of the country you are supplying.

Information is available from www.gov.uk or alternatively you can contact [Environmental Health](#) for advice.