

## AEC STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

<b>SOP No:</b>	16
<b>SOP</b>	Yabby
<b>Scientific Name:</b>	<i>Cherax destructor</i>
<b>Category:</b>	2, 3, 4
<b>Approval Level:</b>	Category 2: School Principal may delegate Category 3: School Principal may <b>NOT</b> delegate Category 4: Animal Ethics Committee
<b>Authority:</b>	<b>Government Schools</b> – Department for Education and Childhood Development Animal Ethics Committee <b>Independent and Catholic Schools</b> – Non-Government Schools Animal Ethics Committee
<b>Authority Approval Date:</b>	1 August 2010
<b>Last update</b>	22 January 2019
<b>Disclaimer:</b>	<i>This document may be updated at any time. You should check the web site regularly to ensure that you are meeting the most recent recommendations. If you note any concerns with the information provided (inadequate, incorrect) please contact the relevant AEC</i>
<b>Licensing Requirement:</b>	Not applicable for observation purposes (Category 2 & 3). Commercial operations (Category 4) will need to meet a variety of local and state government requirements in relation to licences, permits, local council land use, use and discarding of water, conservation constraints and fisheries requirements.
<b>Compliance Requirement:</b>	If the keeping of yabbies on the site is purely for observation approval is required requires approval from the School Principal for Observation only applications (Category 2 & 3) or Commercial operations (Category 4) i.e. the purpose includes breeding, commercial aquaculture, measuring, weighing or scientific activity – refer also to Aquaculture SOP, approval by the Non-Government Schools Animal Ethics Committee is required. It is recommended that this Standard Operating Procedure be followed as a minimum in the provision of appropriate care and housing for this species.

### General Information:

Yabbies are crustaceans. They have three stages in their life cycle: egg - juvenile - adult. Yabbies have large claws used for defence, fighting, holding food and digging. They breathe by using their gills to absorb oxygen from the water. They draw water under the back of their exoskeleton (hard shell), over their gills and out through a hole near their head. They are generally green or brown in colour. Yabbies live in streams, lakes, dams and ponds in south-eastern Australia. In the water, yabbies like to hide under rocks, mud and branches. Predators such as humans, fish, turtles, birds and water rats eat Yabbies.

### Physical Attributes:

- **Size (adult):** Approximately at 1 year 6cm, 2 years 10cms and 3 years 12cms.
- **Weight (adult):** Approximately 100gms.
- **Life span:** Average life span 3 years.
- **Sexual maturity:** Usually when they are 10-20gms they can begin to breed.
- **Gestation period:** 1-2 months.
- **Number of offspring:** 200-1,000 eggs.

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### Behaviour:

- **Normal:** They are very adaptable and dependent on environmental conditions. They are very active and breed when conditions are right. Temperature, weather conditions (drought, flood) water quantity and quality determine the number of healthy yabbies in a water source.
- **Socialisation:** Yabbies are aggressive and when several are together in a small space they will fight.
- **Activity levels (moult etc):** They shed their exoskeleton and grow a new one. This moulting occurs more often when they are growing faster. During this time they are very vulnerable and will lay 'shivering' on their side out of the water. It takes up to 2 days for the new exoskeleton to harden.

### Environment:

#### For observation purposes:

- **Space:** You will need an aquarium 60cm x 30cm x 30cm. There should be a gravel base.
- **Movement:** They have four pairs of walking legs and a long thick tail. To move through the water quickly, they flap their tail. A flip with the tail will propel them backwards rapidly.
- **Water:** Whilst they do not need water maintained as fish do they still need clean water. Change  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the water every 3-4 weeks.
- **Temperature:** Lighting and heating of the tank to 24 degrees will encourage breeding.
- **Filtration:** An under gravel filtration system will assist to keep water clean.
- **Ventilation:** Ensure no sprays or fumes are used around the aquarium. A mesh top will assist with ventilation.
- **Covering:** Where the yabbies are at risk from younger children and to assist with preventing escapes the tank should be covered.
- **Shelter:** The aquarium should provide an area for refuge from lights, action and other yabbies. This can be created with plants, rocks and rocky overhangs. If breeding occurs there needs to be lots of spots for the babies to hide. Removing the male may assist with their survival but be advised mothers may also eat them. They could be placed in a separate aquarium.
- **Cleaning:** Regular daily removal of food waste is required. To clean the whole tank, remove and place the yabbies in a secure container. Rinse the tank carefully and fill again with gravel and items. Do not use chemicals. Rinse gravel through thoroughly.

#### For farming purposes:

*This needs to be researched thoroughly before commencing – set up, feeding, harvesting and legal obligations.*

- **Extensive Farming:** this uses pre-existing bodies of water – wetlands, dams.
- **Intensive Farming:** This approach requires purpose built dams and ponds. Usually a 1m deep, lined with plastic, earthen ponds, .25 hectares in size, pumping for drainage and harvesting. They also provide artificial hiding areas – tyres, pipes and pots.

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- Feeding:**
- **Diet:** Yabbies eat algae, dead and decaying plants, and sometimes small fish insects or animals. They can be fed finely chopped vegetables and goldfish pellets.
  - **Daily requirements:** They only need a small amount of food each day – 1 pellet and ¼ teaspoon of vegetable matter.
  - **Supplementary feeding:** Feeding of fresh raw meat can occur occasionally but be advised they may hide the meat and this can result in fouling the water.
- Breeding:**
- **Mating:** The male deposits spermatophores at the base of the females rear walking legs. They tend to mate at night.
  - **Pregnancy:** Yabbies will only breed when the temperature is high enough and there is sufficient water. The female releases eggs into the spermatophores and fertilisation occurs. The fertile eggs attach to the underside of the females tail. A week after hatching they will move off the female.
  - **Fate planning:** They must NEVER be released into the environment or waterways.
- Handling:**
- **Human:** adults can easily handle yabbies. Pick them up at the body behind the pincers. Be careful not to squeeze too hard.
  - **Equipment:** Yabbies can be caught in nets or strainers as required.
  - **Transporting:** Yabbies should be transported in a container that has been lightly sprayed with water to maintain humidity or cover them with a wet cloth. Transport quickly and do not leave unattended or allow the yabby to heat.
  - **Children:** Children can also be taught how to pick up yabbies. Children should not knock on the tanks.
- Hygiene:**
- Thoroughly wash hands with soap and running water for at least 10-15 seconds after working or handling any animals. Dry hands with clean paper, cloth towel or air dryer. Turn off the tap with the paper towel if possible.
- Signs of illness:**
- **Indicators:** failure to thrive, lethargic, difficulty moving, loss of limbs and injuries.
- Treatments:**
- Assistance from a veterinarian should be sought for confirmation of conditions and treatment options.
- Euthanasia:**
- When an illness or injury is such that recovery is unlikely then the animal must be euthanased by a veterinarian. Any death must be reported to the Animal Ethics Committee using the appropriate form (see section relating to ADVERSE EVENTS). Forms are available on the relevant websites – see contact details below.
- Disposal/fate planning:**
- When no longer required yabbies must be re homed. They must NEVER be released into the environment or waterways. Bodies must be disposed of correctly in accordance with local council regulations.
- Holiday and weekend care:**
- As they require specific conditions they would not cope well with being rostered to family carers. They need to be checked daily and fed regularly over weekends and holiday periods or taken home by staff.

## **AEC STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

**Approved activities:** Observation, Commercial operations

**Resources:**

**Websites:**

[www.rirdc.gov.au](http://www.rirdc.gov.au)

[www.nativefish.asn.au](http://www.nativefish.asn.au)

<http://www.agriculture.gov.au/fisheries/aquaculture/aquaculture-industry-in-australia>