**American Lobster**

American lobster (*Homarus americanus*) is an invasive non-native species which could potentially present significant economic and ecological impacts. A small number of reports of American lobsters have been received in GB in recent years. Whether a breeding population is established, or how widespread American lobsters are in the wild, is not known.

A campaign to raise awareness of American lobsters as a non-native species and encourage reporting of them is proposed to help us better understand their presence and distribution in Scottish waters. The campaign would complement a similar campaign planned by other authorities across the UK and Ireland.

**Impacts**

A number of economic and environmental threats have been identified via GB risk assessment. Impacts would vary depending on whether individuals or breeding populations exist but could include:

* Competition with native lobster and crabs for food and shelter
* Risk of hybridisation through interbreeding with native lobster
* Disease vector for pathogens such as white spot syndrome virus and gaffkaemia (in captive lobsters)

**Campaign proposal**

The proposed timeline for a campaign is Spring 2020 (date to be confirmed). The campaign will raise awareness and encourage reporting and provision of samples for identification by MS Science throughout the year.

This would be achieved through:

* Providing identification sheets to fishermen and Fishery Officers to improve awareness of the physical differences between American and European lobsters.
* Requesting that fishermen **retain and report** any suspected American Lobsters to Fishery Offices
* Providing sampling kits to Fishery Offices, with the possibility to provide these to fishermen in more remote locations as appropriate.
* Asking for specimens to be forwarded to Marine Scotland Science for verification by DNA analysis.

**Points for Discussion**

* Logistics of reporting
* How the IFGs can help
* Areas where the industry suspects presence of American Lobsters
* How best to disseminate information to individuals

**Next steps**

Information such as posters, leaflets and online resources will be disseminated to Fishery Offices and other interests, as recommended by Inshore Fisheries Groups. Advance notification will also be provided of when we will start the campaign, in conjunction with the other administrations to ensure a joined-up approach.

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