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Abalone infected with viral ganglioneuritis. (Photo: VADA)

## Abalone virus threat overestimated



**AUSTRALIA**

**Tuesday, September 01, 2009, 15:30 (GMT + 9)**

It has been determined that abalone manifests the viral infection only when under stress and that the virus is endemic, recent findings show. This means the impact of a new outbreak of the dreaded virus that hampered the Tasmanian abalone industry's progress last year might have been blown out of proportion, industry observers note.

Abalone infected with viral ganglioneuritis (AVG) were found in storage tanks at a processing facility in the south of the state last week, informed the [Department of Primary Industries \(DPI\)](#).

Consequently, the molluscs and water were disposed of safely and the tanks have been duly sterilised, said chief executive of the [Tasmanian Abalone Council](#) Dean Lisson. The virus has not been detected in wild molluscs thus far, *ABC AU* reports.

DPI and industry officials have stated that the disease occurs naturally in the wild and has not been caused by humans.

"That comes down to good tank management and good handling management," Lisson said.

Heavy rainfall may have been responsible for the latest outbreak, believes the manager of bio-

security at the department Alex Schaap.

"It may well be that the salinity of the intake water decreased slightly and that can be quite stressful for abalone," he explained.

Schapp expects that neither fisheries nor exports will experience disturbances of any kind due to the most recent outbreak. He will be meeting with industry groups on Tuesday.

"We won't be closing any fisheries at this point, we don't have any cause to do so," he affirmed. "But we will be having discussions with industry about how we can improve the bio-security status of the processing sector and the marine farming sector."

The Tasmanian wild abalone industry is worth AUD 100 million (EUR 54 million) and produces 25 per cent of the world's supply. It is also responsible for employing more than 1,400 people in the industry, including fishermen and processing plant workers.

#### **Related articles:**

- **Fishing ban proposed for the AVG-afflicted abalone**
- **Tasmania declared free of abalone virus**

By *Natalia Real*  
[editorial@fis.com](mailto:editorial@fis.com)  
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[www.fis.com/fis/worldnews/worldnews.asp?...r=&day=&id=33654&ndb=1&df=0](http://www.fis.com/fis/worldnews/worldnews.asp?...r=&day=&id=33654&ndb=1&df=0)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/08/31/2672453.htm>

A virus that caused the partial shut-down of Tasmania's abalone industry a year ago might not be as big a problem as first thought.

📄 Abalone virus fears played down - ABC News (Australian Broadcasting Corporation)

Wednesday, 2 September 2009 8:32 AM

## **Abalone virus fears played down**

Posted Mon Aug 31, 2009 9:08pm AEST  
Updated Mon Aug 31, 2009 9:07pm AEST

- **Map: Hobart 7000**

A virus that caused the partial shut-down of Tasmania's abalone industry a year ago might not be as big a problem as first thought.

Another outbreak has pointed to the virus being endemic and only surfacing when abalone get stressed.

The Department of Primary Industries says abalone held in storage tanks at a southern processing plant were last week found to have the ganglioneuritis virus.

The molluscs were destroyed and the tanks disinfected but there have been no cases found in the wild.

Both the industry and the Department say that supports the view that the virus occurs naturally.

The Department's manager of bio-security Alex Schaap says heavy rain could have contributed to the most recent outbreak.

"It may well be that the salinity of the intake water decreased slightly and that can be quite stressful for abalone," he said.

Mr Schaap is meeting industry groups tomorrow.

He says he does not foresee the closure of any fisheries or any disruption to exports.

"We won't be closing any fisheries at this point, we don't have any cause to do so," said Mr Schaap.

"But we will be having discussions with industry about how we can improve the bio-security status of

the processing sector and the marine farming sector."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/08/31/2671704.htm>

The head of Tasmania's abalone industry has confirmed there has been an outbreak of a potentially deadly abalone virus at a processing factory in the south of the state.

Abalone virus outbreak - ABC News (Australian Broadcasting Corporation)

Wednesday, 2 September 2009 8:31 AM

## Abalone virus outbreak

Posted Mon Aug 31, 2009 11:49am AEST



There have been no traces of the virus in wild abalone. (ABC News: Cate Grant, file photo)

- **Map:** [Hobart 7000](#)

The head of Tasmania's abalone industry has confirmed there has been an outbreak of a potentially deadly abalone virus at a processing factory in the south of the state.

The chief executive of the Tasmanian Abalone Council, Dean Lisson says traces of the ganglioneuritis virus were found in abalone stored in a tank at the factory last week.

They have now been destroyed, the tanks disinfected and the water stored for safe disposal.

Mr Lisson says there are no traces of the virus in the wild, which supports the view the virus is endemic to the fishery and only surfaces when abalone get stressed.

He says that is good news because it makes it a management issue.

"That comes down to good tank management and good handling management," he said.

Mr Lisson says he has talked to the state's chief vet and he does not believe any fisheries will be forced to close.

[www.themercury.com.au/article/2009/08/31/94301\\_tasmania-news.html](http://www.themercury.com.au/article/2009/08/31/94301_tasmania-news.html)

Abalone virus alarm ANOTHER outbreak of a deadly abalone virus has been detected in southern Tasmania.

Abalone virus alarm Tasmania News - The Mercury - The Voice of Tasmania

Wednesday, 2 September 2009 8:22 AM

## Abalone virus alarm

ANNE MATHER

August 31, 2009 08:14am

**ANOTHER outbreak of a deadly abalone virus has been detected in southern Tasmania.**

Authorities discovered the virus at a processing plant last Thursday.

Laboratory testing confirmed the presence of abalone viral ganglioneuritis.

The state's chief veterinary officer Rod Andrewartha yesterday said action had been taken at the facility to contain the virus.

Dr Andrewartha said he would explain the latest outbreak to the industry either today or tomorrow.

"We will be discussing with the industry where we take it from here," he said.

The virus has the potential to devastate the state's \$100 million abalone industry.

The virus had not been detected in Tasmania since last year. It was first detected in the state last September, also at a processing plant.

The detection prompted widespread testing of wild abalone around Tasmania.

The virus was detected in only one wild abalone and that result was later deemed to be inconclusive.

Dr Andrewartha said there was a possibility the virus could be endemic in Tasmanian abalone and only manifested when the shellfish were under stress, such as when held in tanks.

Victoria's abalone industry has been devastated by the quick-killing virus, with quotas reduced by up to 90 per cent.

Tasmanian Abalone Council chief executive Dean Lisson said the industry was looking at reducing the impact of the virus by improving the way it managed abalone.

Mr Lisson said there was growing evidence the virus was endemic and only attacked abalone when they were under stress while stored in holding tanks for live export.

"We believe it comes down to a management issue," he said.

"It comes down to maintaining the best environment for them."

Mr Lisson said the industry was looking at measures to decrease stress levels in storage tanks, such as:

- Ensuring salinity levels were as close as possible to sea water.
- Keeping temperatures cool -- about 12C.
- Removing waste products through bio-filters.
- Keeping stock densities low.

Mr Lisson said the recent outbreak had affected only a handful of abalone at the processing plant.

And he said the virus posed no health risks for humans.

<http://www.weekendpost.co.za/article.aspx?id=464549>

The Weekend Post Online

Wednesday, 2 September 2009 8:14 AM

Abalone seizures haul in millions for the law

2009/09/01

Yolandé Stander WEEKEND POST REPORTER



PERLEMOEN poaching is a lucrative business not only for those involved, but it is bolstering the coffers of the authorities tasked with fighting it.

Over the past month in Port Elizabeth alone, perlemoen worth more than R5-million has been seized and 24 suspected dealers and

poachers arrested.

Rhodes University ichthyology head Prof Peter Britz and former PhD student Serge Raemaekers, now with the University of Cape Town's Environmental Evaluation Unit, say up to 2000 tons leave the Eastern Cape every year, of which a portion is seized by authorities.

The poached perlemoen – which is harvested locally and leaves the country through Johannesburg – fetches up to \$125 a kilogram (R1030). The flipside comes when it is confiscated by either police or Marine and Coastal Management (MCM), a branch of the Environmental Affairs Department.

MCM spokesman Carol Moses said the police usually handed it over to them. "The department has appointed two service providers – Walker Bay Cannery in Hermanus and Overberg Commercial Abalone Divers in Gansbaai. We then hand the abalone over to them and they are tasked with the processing, packaging and selling the shellfish." The perlemoen was only sold to overseas buyers. "Not just anyone can buy (it) ... Potential buyers are adjudicated by the service providers before they can be eligible to buy."

The proceeds are then placed in the Marine Living Resources Fund (MLRF) and ploughed back into the operations of the MCM.

But there are ethical questions surrounding this process.

DA MP and environment spokesman Gareth Morgan said there is a "perverse economic incentive" for MCM officials to maximise their income.

MCM allocates and manages fishing rights, regulates recreational fishing, manages the country's many marine protected areas, protects and monitors coastal and estuarine resources, conducts research into fish stocks and advises on the status of fish stocks, controls vehicle use on beaches and promotes fish farming or mariculture.

Moses said poachers' equipment, like boats and diving gear, was also confiscated in some cases. "This is then used by enforcement agencies."

This may sound like a win-win situation for MCM, but the process has its shortfalls.

A report by the Auditor-General on the handling of confiscated abalone by MCM has revealed several problem areas.

The report states that the income of the MLRF, which funds MCM operations, has been significantly boosted in recent years from the seizure sales. But it has emerged that the control measures are weak and there are major policy gaps.

Morgan submitted a parliamentary question this week to ascertain how MCM and the department were responding to the findings, and the corrective measures they were instituting.

He said the selling of confiscated perlemoen was a lucrative business for MCM and that it earned about R55-million in the 2007/08 financial year.

"It is thus of concern that the various processes associated with these sales have been very weak, resulting in income losses and over-expenditure on the processes." The profit should be much greater, Morgan said.

The AG found that payments to the processors exceeded the budgeted expenditure by more than double between October 2006 and August 2007.

Further shortcomings include no formal policy and guidelines nor training and information brochures about the process.

The department also did not monitor progress of court cases, thus not knowing which had been finalised and whether the samples kept for evidence could be released for processing.

Morgan said it was ironic that while more than 300 legal perlemoen rights holders were denied the opportunity to make an income, MCM was profiting from the illegal fishery to the tune of several million rand a year.

“It is thus imperative that the handling of confiscated abalone is improved in order to maximise income that can in turn be used for more research and compliance measures.”

<http://www.eyewitnessnews.co.za/articleprog.aspx?id=20743>

📄 Eyewitness News: Poaching policing strategy slammed

Wednesday, 2 September 2009 8:13 AM

Poaching policing strategy slammed  
Regan Thaw | 4 Days Ago

The South African Abalone Industry Association says poachers have made some areas in the Cape strongholds for their illicit activities.

Earlier this week, poachers attacked Marine and Coastal Management officials as well as police officers who raided a home in Hawston where over 9 000 units of perlemoen were found.

The gang fired live ammunition at officials as they fought to keep their haul.

The association's Scott Russel said a lack of adequate policing had allowed poachers to become more brazen.

He added Marine and Coastal Management's approach to addressing the issue made no sense.

“They are allowing poaching to happen instead of preventing it and then they simply seize the abalone and sell it to raise funds to keep their finances solvent. Then people think that they're justified in being lawless.”

Conservation group FEIKE's Shaheen Moola said poachers were not deterred by authorities because they see them as toothless.

“Poachers are going to steal to make ever-increasing profits. They will not necessarily just give way to MCM officials or SAPS officials trying to stop them.”

<http://www.weekendpost.co.za/article.aspx?id=464436>

📄 The Weekend Post Online

Wednesday, 2 September 2009 8:12 AM

Seized perlemoen sold to help fund Marine and Coastal Management

2009/08/29

Yolandé Stander WEEKEND POST REPORTER [standeryo@avusa.co.za](mailto:standeryo@avusa.co.za)

POACHING perlemoen may be a very profitable business for the perpetrators, but when they get caught and police seize their ill-gotten gains, the loot also boosts the funds of those trying to curb the problem.

Marine and Coastal Management (MCM) – a branch of the department of environmental affairs – confiscates abalone on a regular basis.

It is then processed, packaged and sold to adjudicated overseas buyers.

The proceeds of these transactions are then ploughed back into MCM to fund their

various operations.

This, however, not only raises a few ethical questions, but also leaves room for various pitfalls.

To find out what the experts have to say and how the process from confiscation to the selling point works, read the Weekend Post.

[www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/wee-ban-to-stop-big-boating-problem-2009...](http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/wee-ban-to-stop-big-boating-problem-2009...)

☰ Urinating off deck causes man overboard incidents | Man overboard code of practice Wednesday, 2 September 2009 8:09 AM

## Wee ban to stop big boating problem

**CHRIS THOMSON**

August 28, 2009

Urinating off the side of commercial fishing boats should be banned, according to a [new WA Government code](#) to help fishers deal with man overboard incidents.

WorkSafe's draft code of practice on man overboard incidents recommends the urination ban because of its high risk nature in choppy seas, but recognises "it can happen".

In lieu of its preferred total urination ban, the code recommends commercial fishing boat owners institute safety measures such as:

- providing a designated safe place to urinate over the side, with a railing or a fall prevention system in place;
- implementing a procedure where, before crew go to the toilet, they let somebody know or ask them to keep watch;
- ensuring crew wear a life jacket when on deck alone; and
- providing an alarm system for man overboard incidents.

Some of the "many" overboard incidents the code says have led to deaths in the past 20 years include:

- a boat owner who drowned when he left the wheelhouse of a cray boat to urinate off the deck;
- a crew member who went missing while on watch and the skipper was asleep; and
- a deck hand who vanished after he was last seen at the rear of a fishing boat smoking a cigarette.

Since 1988, WA's commercial fishing industry has seen 44 deaths from a range of causes.

All man overboard incidents from commercial fishing craft must be reported to the WA Department of Transport.

Any comments on the [draft code](#) can be lodged with WorkSafe by November 27.

<http://www.eyewitnessnews.co.za/articleprog.aspx?id=20642>

☰ Eyewitness News: New vessel to boost anti-poaching patrols Friday, 28 August 2009 11:28 AM

## New vessel to boost anti-poaching patrols

Themba Boyi | 19 Hours Ago

The Table Mountain National Parks' Marine Unit is hoping to increase the number of environmental crime busts now that they have added another vessel to their fleet.

The eight metre-long *Jasus Lalandii* was seized from poachers during an abalone bust three years ago.

It was redesigned and refitted to allow crew members to stay at sea longer, thus increasing their chances of netting poachers and smugglers.

Chief Director of Coastal Zone Management at Marine and Coastal Management Dr Razeena Omar said the TMNP Marine Unit had done sterling work since its inception and the new acquisition would hopefully turn up the heat on poachers.

"We do have an enforcement plan and a strategy and I think it is working you know. There's a special emphasis placed on that within Marine and Coastal Management."

[www.capetimes.co.za/?...onId=275&fArticleId=vn20090827040911239C474306](http://www.capetimes.co.za/?...onId=275&fArticleId=vn20090827040911239C474306)

Cape Town's English morning newspaper, with South African and world news, sport and lifestyle coverage. Has a strong weekly lifestyle section Top of the Times.

☰ Cape Times

Thursday, 27 August 2009 3:56 PM

## **Abalone poachers, cops in shootout**

*27 August 2009, 06:06*

Violence erupted in Hawston on Tuesday night when a handful of police and conservation officials were ambushed in the house of suspected abalone poachers, who hurled rocks through the windows, slashed vehicle tyres and fired at the officials with live ammunition.

The police and unarmed Marine and Coastal Management (MCM) inspectors took cover under tables in the house to escape the onslaught from the mob of about 80.

The poachers, who had 9 600 fresh abalone on the property, were fighting to keep their illegal haul worth about R4-million.

This is the latest incident in a series of violent clashes between poaching gangs and the law in what is escalating into a small war on the southern Cape coast, where the rocketing international price of abalone is fuelling the illegal trade.

Abalone poaching has increased by about 300 percent in the past three years, and sources say Chinese nationals exchange drugs for abalone.

And in Benoni on Wednesday, officials from MCM, the Green Scorpions and the organised crime unit bust an illegal abalone processing facility on a farm where they seized close on 10 000 dried abalone and arrested two Chinese nationals.

Another two Chinese nationals were arrested between Gordons Bay and Rooi Els on Wednesday with a van carrying 6 000 abalone.

The violent clash in Hawston was triggered after Hermanus police and MCM inspectors established that a large shipment of freshly poached abalone had been taken to Hawston.

Senior Superintendent Phindelwa Mavakala of the Hermanus police said on Wednesday eight police officers and four MCM inspectors had gone to the house in Hawston, where they found a group of about 50 men counting fresh, shelled abalone in the backyard.

The group scattered, jumping over fences when they saw the police, she said. They disappeared in the dark between the houses.

"While the police were loading the abalone into a van, a crowd gathered and started throwing stones at the police and slashed the tyres of the van. There were about 80 to 100 people and the police were forced to run into the house," Mavakala said. "Some of the mob fired with live ammunition, and police took cover under tables and behind furniture, and called for back-up."

Police from Stanford and Kleinmond and reinforcements from Hermanus, and MCM inspectors, sped to the scene.

An eyewitness said about 30 law enforcement vehicles converged at the street, but the mob had blocked it and they could not at first get to the house.

Police fired rubber bullets to try to disperse the mob, but when the mob fired back, police used live ammunition.

The mob eventually dispersed and the vans moved to the house and seized the abalone. No arrests were made.

One Hawston man was shot in the stomach and taken to Hermanus Hospital, where he was stabilised. Police officers escaped with minor injuries.

- melanie.gosling@inl.co.za

[www.standard.net.au/news/local/news/general/case-cracked-charges-la...](http://www.standard.net.au/news/local/news/general/case-cracked-charges-la...)

POLICE believe they have cracked a crime ring responsible for nine Victorian abalone heists, including the south-west's biggest ever theft.

☰ CASE CRACKED: Charges laid over \$230,000 abalone theft - Local News Tuesday, 25 August 2009 11:55 AM  
- News - General - The Warrnambool Standard

## CASE CRACKED: Charges laid over \$230,000 abalone theft

ANDREW THOMSON

22/08/2009 4:00:00 AM



The discarded stolen truck in 2008

POLICE believe they have cracked a crime ring responsible for nine Victorian abalone heists, including the south-west's biggest ever theft.

Burglars netted 4.5 tonnes of abalone from Port Fairy's Sou'west Seafoods in February last year. Police valued the stock at \$230,000, making it the single biggest robbery in the region's history.

This week a Sydney man was charged with nine counts of theft. He is expected to appear in the Bairnsdale Magistrates Court on September 25.

Bairnsdale detectives are heading the investigation, assisted by Warrnambool detectives, which has focused on a Sydney crime ring. Investigations are continuing.

Detective Senior Constable Colin Ryan, of the Warrnambool CIU, said the arrest and charges were an excellent result for the team of Warrnambool and Bairnsdale detectives.

Police allege the Port Fairy crime was one of nine abalone thefts around Victoria committed by the well-organised syndicate.

The Port Fairy theft was the second successful raid on abalone factories at the time.

The Mallacoota Abalone Fisherman's Co-Op was also broken into during December 2007, with a couple of tonnes of abalone stolen.

Another plant in Dandenong was also targeted at about the same time but thieves were disturbed before they made off with any of the valuable stock.

The thefts occurred in the lead-up to Chinese New Year, a 15-day festival that is the most important traditional Chinese holiday.

It is the peak period for the abalone industry, with the seafood prominent in New Year feasts as a symbol of good fortune.

Sou'west Seafoods secretary Margaret Whitehead at the time estimated the stolen stock would fetch about a third of its value on the black market.

Detectives believe the Port Fairy theft happened at the abalone processing plant overnight on Tuesday, February 5 last year.

Thieves cut holes in the factory's security gates and the freezer room wall before loading a truck and driving away with the mostly black lip abalone.

The stolen four-tonne white Hino van was found abandoned, about six kilometres north of Port Fairy, about 10am the following day.

It had been dumped at the site of the company's discarded shell stocks, with the frozen abalone transferred into another unknown vehicle.

`` It is one of our region's larger burglaries," Detective Senior Constable Ryan said at the time.

`` It was well planned and well executed."

The Port Fairy theft was a bitter blow for the industry, which had suffered through a crippling virus that ruined regional stocks in the preceding couple of years.

As the only seller of abalone in the region, Sou'west Seafoods had borne the brunt of dwindling supplies.

Ms Whitehead said at the time of the theft that 4.5 tonnes of abalone took up to three weeks to accumulate and process.

The freezer did not have an alarm system because they fail to operate properly in the minus 30-degree temperature.

Ms Whitehead said the thieves did not trigger movement sensors in the factory, indicating knowledge of the site.

The haul could have been much larger though, with two shipments cleared from the freezer over previous days.

[businessmirror.com.ph/home/regions/14771-tawi-tawi-abalone-hatchery...](http://businessmirror.com.ph/home/regions/14771-tawi-tawi-abalone-hatchery...)

The online version of the Philippines' leading business newspaper features virtually all the stories and statistical data available in the print edition.

 Tawi-Tawi abalone hatchery makes first sale

Tuesday, 25 August 2009 11:43 AM

## [Tawi-Tawi abalone hatchery makes first sale](#)



### Regions

Written by Bong Garcia Jr. / Correspondent

Tuesday, 18 August 2009 20:29

BONGAO, Tawi-Tawi—The Tawi-Tawi High-Value Multi-Species Hatchery on Monday sold its first abalone juveniles to a fishers' association, signaling the start of the high-value sea-product business in this southern tip of the country.

The hatchery, operated by Mega Fishing Corp. (MFC), is a joint enterprise of the national and provincial governments set up last year with technical assistance from the United States Agency for International Development-funded Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) program.

MFC Hatchery officer in charge Arlyn Carroz told the BusinessMirror the first batch of abalone juveniles was produced and reared for five months prior to its harvest.

The P26-million MFC Hatchery is in barangay Lato-Lato, a 30-minute boat ride from this town.

The first sale, comprising of 1,800 abalone juveniles, was made to Belatan Halo Association (BHA) of barangay Belatan Halo, Panglima Sugala town, at P10 per piece or at a total of P18,000.

The BHA members were former Moro National Liberation Front fighters who were also provided technical assistance by GEM through trainings.

GEM senior aquaculture specialist Tito Ilagan said BHA is expected to make its first sale within eight to 10 months of abalone already at a marketable size.

Ilagan said the current market price of abalone is about P550 per kilo, with about 20 abalones to a kilo.

He said initial arrangement has been made for the hatchery to buy back the market-size abalone for purposes of value-added processing to produce canned abalone for the China market.

He said the hatchery could probably enter into contract-growing arrangements with BHA and serve as a conduit for financing the purchase of capital equipment.

The hatchery also spawns grouper larvae and rears them to grow-out size aside from abalone.

20 Aug 2009: There's Abagold In Hermanus

Friday, 21 August 2009 9:48 AM

## **20 Aug 2009: There's Abagold In Hermanus**

A NEW FORCE in the Cape fishing industry has quietly established itself in the holiday town of Hermanus in the form of perlemoen specialist, Abagold.

While not yet a fishing sector giant, Abagold – which only converted to a public company last year - has carved a lucrative niche in hatching, rearing, processing and exporting of local abalone (or perlemoen).

The abalone rearing industry has come to the fore of late with JSE-listed empowerment group Sekunjalo – which owns Premier Fishing – also making strong inroads into the sector. Prospects for 'abalone growers' have also been significantly enhanced by government's decision to preclude the harvesting of wild abalone.

Abagold, though, has a most interesting history.

The venture started way back in 1984 when a local veterinarian, Pierre Hugo, started researching the techniques and merits of breeding abalone in captivity.

Five years later Hugo was experimenting in the breeding of abalone on the Old Harbour at Hermanus and by 1991 he had set up a pilot hatchery.

By 1993 Hugo had received a permit to cultivate, harvest and sell abalone – which meant the fledgling operation could release 500 000 abalone larvae in the Old Harbour in Hermanus for re-seeding.

Naturally, word of Hugo's success got around the small town, and in 1995 the venture was incorporated into Hermanus Abalone.

Three years later the Sea View abalone farm with a 60 ton a year capacity was established in the New Harbour in Hermanus, which saw the cultivation of the first abalone pearls.

In 1999 the first 100kg of live farmed abalone was exported to the Far East, and three years later the fast growing business needed to raise R35 million through a public share issue and bank loans to fund the acquisition (and construction) of the Bergsig abalone farm in Hermanus.

Shortly after the first of 1 000 breeding tanks was placed in the Bergsig, Hermanus Abalone changed its name to Abagold (which admittedly sounds like an easier corporate brand to market

internationally).

Three years ago Abagold made further inroads into the abalone sector by setting up the Abamax Abalone Farm in the New Harbour in Hermanus in conjunction with an empowerment partner. The company has since become the sole owner of the facility.

The last two years have seen matters develop a-pace at Abagold. The company created its own 'Pure Gold Abalone' brand and secured a lease for a 6.3 hectare site in Hermanus in partnership with the Overstrand Municipality and local communities for the development of a community seaweed project

There is not much financial information available on Abagold - presumably because the company is not keen for competitors to gain too much of an insight into the business.

What CBN could gauge, though, was that Abagold is a sizeable business with 230 employees. It is capable of producing more than 220 tonnes of dried abalone, which mostly makes its way to the Far East.

The interesting aspect of Abagold's business model is that the aquaculture cycle is a near five year process from larvae to plate. Abagold's product spends four years in the farm before being moved to land tanks, which requires the pumping of 6 million litres of seawater every hour.

From what CBN could garner, Abagold exported a not insubstantial 220 tons of abalone to the Far East in 2008, which generated turnover of almost R60 million.

The company is aiming to breach the 300 ton mark in the next two years – which, of course, may be challenging with the global economic slowdown putting a dampener on international spending on exotic seafoods like abalone and lobster.

It is interesting to note that in 2008 Premier Fishing signalled an intention (after a R40 million investment and the acquisition of Marine Growers in PE) to push production at its abalone aquaculture farm near Gansbaai to 300 tons a year. At that point Premier Fishing believed a 300 ton capacity could yield up to R17 million a year in profits.

For Abagold MD Christo du Plessis, though, the business aims to achieve sustainable wealth through balance. Writing on Abagold's website, he notes: "Responsible growth is vital, and we intend to do this by building on our established reputation and leveraging off our renowned brand, innovative production systems and well trained team."

He says over the past 13 years Abagold has built a brand that clients associate with quality and consistency.

"Through our experience gained over 20 years in serving the industry and market, we have obtained the knowledge and expertise to become a leader in integrated mariculture and we intend to keep this dominant position."


CBN, of course, wonders whether at this delicate point in the global (and local) economy a dominant position in the abalone sector can be put beyond doubt through further corporate action.

With a revitalised Sekunjalo pushing Premier Fishing for more growth it might perhaps not be completely a-miss to speculate that a merger between Abagold and Premier's abalone interests is something that could cross executives' minds.

<http://www.cbn.co.za/dailynews/4002.html>

[www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25938854-5006787,00.html](http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25938854-5006787,00.html)

INVESTORS in an aquaculture company whose abalone breeding programs were hit by mortality rates of up to 100 per cent have launched a bid to keep the venture going.

 Abalone investors refuse to take dive | The Australian

Monday, 17 August 2009 2:47 PM

## **Abalone investors refuse to take dive**

Pia Akerman and Gavin Lower | August 17, 2009

Article from: [The Australian](#)

**INVESTORS in an aquaculture company whose abalone breeding programs were hit by mortality rates of up to 100 per cent have launched a bid to keep the venture going.**

A group of the growers has made a \$250,000 deposit so they can assess the state of Australian Bight Abalone's finances and its failed crops.

John Alford, one of the original investors in ABA, told The Australian: "The growers, as far as we're concerned, have put \$45million into this company, and it's their company. If we can take over the company... then we will.

"We look at it as a company with a pile of assets that has a cash-flow problem. If we can fix the cash-flow problem, that company can go forward."

The \$250,000 deposit will not become binding until Wednesday week.

A spokeswoman for administrators McGrath Nicol said the company would no longer speak to The Australian, since it obtained a copy of a confidential report detailing mortality rates of up to 100 per cent among the abalone. Target rates between 14 and 21 per cent were published in ABA's product disclosure statements to potential investors.

The company went into voluntary administration last month, leaving 1200 people who invested \$43.8m in the company in limbo.

Opponents of the company's plan to farm abalone on South Australia's Eyre Peninsula claimed the site was unsuitable, while industry insiders have raised specific concerns about the way ABA's aquaculture licences were approved for commercial production.

The state opposition has called for a select committee to inquire into ABA.

But the Rann government has rejected the calls, with Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Minister Paul Caica saying he saw no need to review decisions relating to the grant and conversion of ABA's leases.

ABA's woes dragged the South Australian government into the national debate on the influence of lobbyists after it was revealed that former Labor senator and party fundraiser, Nick Bolkus, was headhunted to become a director of ABA.

<http://www.weekendpost.co.za/article.aspx?id=458218>

 The Weekend Post Online

Monday, 17 August 2009 7:19 AM

## **Perlemoen poachers intensify pillaging of East Cape shores**

2009/08/16

Brian Hayward CHIEF REPORTER

THE voracious global demand for perlemoen has resulted in the Eastern Cape becoming a major black market supplier and, despite intensified police activity, poaching of the sought-after shellfish continues unabated amid fears natural stocks could soon be obliterated.

Although police have swooped on several upmarket homes of alleged poachers this month and confiscated big hauls of perlemoen (abalone), researchers believe this is just the tip of the iceberg with the majority able to continue their illegal activities to support extravagant lifestyles.

Up to 2000 tons of perlemoen – which is marketed as a delicacy in the Far East – is thought to leave the Eastern Cape annually with only a small percentage of that seized by police in raids.

These are just some of the findings contained in a groundbreaking report authored

by Grahamstown Rhodes University ichthyology head Prof Peter Britz and his former PhD student Serge Raemaekers, now with the University of Cape Town's Environmental Evaluation Unit.

The report also lambastes government's poorly co-ordinated attempt at stemming the problem.

The report, published in a recent edition of international journal Fisheries Research, includes interviews with several local poachers as well as law enforcement agencies.

According to Britz, who earlier this month was elected chairman of the International Abalone Association, and Raemaekers, the growth of the industry in the region has seen it become as profitable, since it started in the mid-1990s, as in the Western Cape.

The illegal exploitation of perlemoen in both provinces has become so bad that it is described in the report as "the most criminalised wildlife trade in Africa".

Other findings contained in the report include:

- Poaching in the region has become highly organised and is far more sophisticated than previously acknowledged by law enforcement agencies;
- The region has more than 50 "superducks" – 500hp, semi-rigid inflatable boats which can carry up to 15 divers at a time – which can handle a one-ton load of de-shelled perlemoen;
- Up to 2000 tons of perlemoen leaves Eastern Cape shores annually, with just a small portion of that seized by police during raids;
- Perlemoen fished locally is snapped up by buyers in Johannesburg and smuggled over the border to countries like Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana before being transported to the Far East;
- Chinese syndicates, as well as other national and international organised crime cartels, are increasingly moving into the region to harvest and dry perlemoen before sending it to the Far East;
- The depreciating rand has made poaching more profitable and alluring with divers in the province typically paid between \$40 (R330) and \$60 (R490) a kilogram of de-shelled perlemoen, which rises to nearly \$80 (R660) during periods of high demand;
- Boat divers can harvest up to 150kg of de-shelled perlemoen a trip, earning them as much as \$6000 (R49300) for each of the up to six deep-sea trips taken a month; and
- Perlemoen paid to Johannesburg exporters fetches prices of up to \$125/kg (R1030), with payments made mostly in cash, but also bartered for drugs.

According to the authors, brazen poachers are also increasingly casting a wider net by making day trips to the Tsitsikamma coast and even as far afield as Robben Island off Cape Town's coastline.

"The resilience and adaptation of these poachers has been interesting," said Raemaekers. "Depending on the law enforcement and the new gear which comes onto the market, if they can't catch in Algoa Bay, they'll go to Knysna and

Plettenberg Bay and return to Swartkops (on the outskirts of the Bay) and distribute (their catch). They are always 10 steps ahead of law enforcement a lot of the time.”

While poaching in the Western Cape was typified by gangsterism, violence and drugs, in the Eastern Cape poachers entered into the lifestyle out of choice. “The expensive cars and the lifestyle that comes with it (the poaching) is alluring,” said Raemaekers. “It’s huge money and it’s easy to do. A lot of families are benefiting from it in some way or another and for them it’s a lifestyle.”

According to the report, the government’s plan to crack down on the problem was poorly co-ordinated, with most anti-poaching initiatives lasting for the short-term.

But despite the criticism, police believe they are on the right track with more than R5-million worth of perlemoen seized in Nelson Mandela Bay over the past month and 24 suspected dealers and poachers arrested.

On Wednesday, police in Uitenhage arrested a married couple and their sons, aged 18 and 19, as well as a 34-year-old woman who was boarding at their De Mist home, for their alleged involvement in dealing in R220000 worth of perlemoen which was seized at the scene.

Last Friday, police arrested a 47-year-old man with about R2-million worth of perlemoen in Colleen Glen, which was the second haul of the week after the arrest of a 54-year-old man with R1-million of perlemoen ready to be shipped off on Thursday. The week before, 17 suspected perlemoen poachers were arrested after being spotted by marine rangers in Algoa Bay.

SanParks, which is in charge of monitoring the perlemoen hot-bed of Bird Island as it falls under the Addo Elephant National Park, believes it is on the right track with its 2007 establishment of the marine rangers.

“Our aim is to stay in that area. We have had lots of help from tip-offs from the public and we encourage people to carry on reporting that,” said spokesman Megan Taplin.

[www.dailynews.co.za/?fSectionId=&fArticleId=nw20090812000805106C281934](http://www.dailynews.co.za/?fSectionId=&fArticleId=nw20090812000805106C281934)

Afternoon daily newspaper published in Durban, providing coverage of local, South African and international news and sport

 Daily News

Wednesday, 12 August 2009 4:15 PM

## **Alleged poachers given bail**

*12 August 2009, 01:13*

### **Related Articles**

- [Perlemoen seized by police](#)

Three suspected perlemoen poachers were granted R15 000 bail each by the Port Elizabeth Magistrate's Court on Tuesday.

The matter was postponed to September 30 for further investigation.

The three men were arrested last week in two incidents in a space of less than 24 hours.

They were allegedly found with five tons of abalone with a street value of over R5-million.

At the time, police said it was the biggest perlemoen bust ever made in the Eastern Cape.

Inspector Alwin Labans said police were following leads and more arrests were likely to follow soon.  
- Sapa

[www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25917729-5006787,00.html](http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25917729-5006787,00.html)

THE Rann government has rejected calls for a parliamentary inquiry to investigate a collapsed aquaculture company and its dealings with government ministers and officials.

📄 No inquiry into abalone group | The Australian

Wednesday, 12 August 2009 10:46 AM

## No inquiry into abalone group

Pia Akerman | August 12, 2009

Article from: [The Australian](#)

**THE Rann government has rejected calls for a parliamentary inquiry to investigate a collapsed aquaculture company and its dealings with government ministers and officials.**

The state opposition called for a select committee to be established after The Australian revealed numerous contacts between ministers and Andrew Ferguson, chief executive of Australian Bight Abalone, which went into voluntary administration last month.

Mitch Williams, acting Liberal spokesman on fisheries, yesterday said the 1200 people who invested \$43.8 million in the company deserved answers.

"It seems that to clear the air, we need some sort of inquiry," Mr Williams told The Australian. "There are a lot of unanswered questions.

"I think for the future of the aquaculture industry in South Australia, we need to clear the air," he said.

Industry insiders have raised specific concerns about the

way ABA's aquaculture licences were approved for commercial production.

But Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Paul Caica dismissed the calls for a parliamentary inquiry, saying he saw no need to review decisions relating to the grant and conversion of ABA's leases.

"On the basis of the information I've been provided, I'm confident that the processes for the granting and conversion of leases and licences under the Aquaculture Act 2001 are rigorous and transparent," he said.

"I'm also confident that all transactions undertaken with respect to leases and licences held by Australian Bight Abalone have been in accordance with the act."

Mr Caica said he and each fisheries minister before him

had only ever granted leases

on the advice of the Aquaculture Tenure Allocation Board.

Mr Caica is among a string of government figures, including Premier Mike Rann, Deputy Premier Kevin Foley, Infrastructure Minister Patrick Conlon and Planning Minister Paul Holloway, who met Mr Ferguson at official functions, government events and exclusive ALP fundraising events before ABA went into administration.

The political developments came as a confidential report by administrator McGrath Nicol, obtained by The Australian, revealed that whole clusters of the abalone spat seeded in 2007 died due to faulty nets, supplied by a company no longer in use.

The report, written to advise possible buyers, summarises a damning investigation completed by the South Australian Research and Development Institute in May this year.

Despite mortality rate targets of between 14 and 21 per cent in ABA's product disclosure statements to potential investors, SARDI found the mortality rates since 2005 were significantly higher.

Its report showed 84 per cent of the first abalone crop died in 2005, about 97 per cent in the second

year, 93 per cent in 2007 and 62 per cent last year.

ABA director Nick Bolkus -- a former senator, lobbyist and fundraiser for the ALP -- has acknowledged the board's concern about the abalone dying off, but said it was never an issue "until the last few months".

A spokeswoman for the state Primary Industries and Resources Department -- which controls SARDI -- declined to comment on its report, saying it was a commercial, in-confidence report commissioned by ABA

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/08/11/2652020.htm>

The Opposition is demanding a parliamentary inquiry into a failed west coast aquaculture company in South Australia.

📄 Aquaculture inquiry call rejected by SA Govt - ABC News (Australian Broadcasting Corporation)

Tuesday, 11 August 2009 11:10 AM

## **Aquaculture inquiry call rejected by SA Govt**

Posted 3 hours 8 minutes ago

- **Map:** [Port Lincoln 5606](#)

The Opposition is demanding a parliamentary inquiry into a failed west coast aquaculture company in South Australia.

Australian Bight Abalone is in voluntary administration and a series of meetings of investors is being held.

Elliston residents have questioned issues including how the business was allowed in a sensitive environmental area.

SA Opposition fisheries spokesman Adrian Pederick says there may be nothing untoward, but the company's establishment and operation warrant a select committee inquiry.

"Certainly this does not warrant just slipping under the carpet. I think there needs to be an investigation how Australian Bight Abalone has been structured," he said.

"I think there should be just an independent inquiry into the whole program, whether it's government or lobbyists, just to see what has happened in the program and see if there is any murkiness that comes out."

SA Fisheries Minister Paul Caica has rejected the call for a select committee.

He says he is confident that the processes for granting and conversion of leases and licences under the Aquaculture Act are rigorous and transparent.

On that basis, he says he is also confident that all transactions involving Australian Bight Abalone have been in accordance with the Act, including public notification where required.

[www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/breakingnews/sfl-shark-boat-bn08100...](http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/breakingnews/sfl-shark-boat-bn08100...)

Michael Powers and his friends were on board a 21-foot boat Saturday when a 5-foot bull shark decided to pay them an unannounced visit.

📄 Shark jumps onto boat at Haulover Beach -- South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

Tuesday, 11 August 2009 9:28 AM

## **Shark jumps onto boat at Haulover Beach**

HAULOVER BEACH - After a day of spear fishing and lobster diving, a group of boaters got the scare of a lifetime when a shark jumped onto their boat, [WSVN-Ch. 7](#) reports.

Michael Powers and his friends were on board a 21-foot boat Saturday when a shark decided to pay them an unannounced visit. The 5-foot bull shark injured itself after violently flopping around the boat, WSVN reported.

"One minute it was in the air, the next minute it was in the boat just beating everything in God's creation," Powers told WSVN.

It took about 30 minutes for the shark to calm down and stop breaking things in the boat.

The boat suffered very minor damage, WSVN reported. No one was injured.

Fax. (03) 8660 2755      Mob. (0418) 292 004  
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Thursday, 16 July 2009 12:00 AM



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