



GERALDTON  
FISHERMEN'S  
CO-OPERATIVE

Rock Lobster Exporters

# the BROLOS Catcher

February 6, 2018

Issue No. 155

## Market Update

Less than a week out from Chinese New Year (CNY) and we have seen the remarkable China live market burst into life with high demand at reasonable prices. It's been a bit of a rollercoaster start to the new season, partly due to some fishermen choosing to fish for low-cost abundance well ahead of CNY demand, and partly due to some competitive tactics amongst the processors.

The northern deep water run is an opportunity for fishers to catch very high volumes very efficiently and cheaply. This year, there was the added advantage of being able to use the newly approved larger pots. These are ideally suited to the edge-run, catching at roughly twice the rate of standard pots. In combination with high stock numbers, this led to some record catch rates not seen since the commencement of quota management. Boats that were taking two days to fill in previous years were filling up in one day. With Chinese New Year occurring much later this year, (February 16th compared to January 28th in 2017), market demand wasn't growing at the same rate, and oversupply put prices under strain. Despite both fishermen and the Co-op investing in upgrades over recent years, the supply chain can't quite cope with these new peak volumes, and lobsters are spending extended times out of water in cacka-boxes, on deck and while being loaded onto and off trucks and waiting to be graded. This has resulted in an increase in quality complaints from customers, at a cost to members. This is why we are constantly reminding you to reduce drain times and cacka-box times and improve handling.

Those processors with limited exposure to the northern run took the opportunity to push prices high, especially on the smaller grades, in order to disadvantage the Co-op. Unsurprisingly, the northern catch consists of 63% A and B grades during January, compared to just 27% in the south, while overall catch rates are two to three times higher in the north during this time of year. Two processors were actually telling the market that they were losing money despite running very high beach prices: it's not an ideal situation to deliberately drive the market into oversupply for competitive reasons, but such is life in our industry!

Through all of this, GFC remained focused on gaining the best prices for your product and building a profit margin for future distribution to members. Chinese New Year demand has finally kicked in, with some very high demand at decent prices. For example, yesterday we sold a record 45 tonne of live lobsters to eight different destinations, with more than half going direct into China. Border restrictions from Vietnam into China are now commonplace, having a negative impact on quality, but the silver lining is that this is driving trade flows through other entry points.

Unfortunately even with record sales and increased storage capacity, supply has still outstripped demand, with up to 59 tonne in a single day pouring in, 51 tonne of this in the north alone. This has necessitated some frozen production into lower value raw and cooked products: 3% of the catch this season has so far been diverted to the freezers due to oversupply. This is having an impact on the prices of smaller grades, as it's the A and B grades that are processed. The adjusted beach price is still higher than the trigger point for most fishermen, so the fishing pressure continues. Welshpool has come into its own, and the extra storage has helped limit the amount of processing required.

The good news is that many fishermen are catching a high proportion of their quota at reasonable prices, and at extremely low costs. This will have a positive impact on supply for the balance of the season, and with Chinese New Year still ten days away, we should see the trend continue for a while yet. And once again, for all its ups and downs, the remarkable Chinese live market consumes incredible volumes of our product. While we haven't reached the heady levels of two years ago, we have a lot of confidence in the future of this market. We continue to see the market evolve from the traditional trade flows into new and exciting areas. While our B2C sales remain very slow, our B2B efforts are being rewarded with strong sale from Welshpool direct into hotels and restaurants this year.

The Australian dollar strengthened to over US\$0.81 lately, back up to levels last seen in mid-2015. The last 24 hours has seen a rapid weakening however; a trend that we hope continues!



## Another Top Quality Year for GFC 2017/18

The records continue to tumble as GFC fishermen's overall premium percentage consigned in the 2017/18 season again topped the previous year up from 99.19% in 2016/17 to 99.21% 2017/18. While this may only look like a small increase on paper it's important to realise that even a small change in percentage premium on consignment like this can reflect a very large underlying improvement in the average quality of lobsters consigned and this was evident in the improvement we saw in the survival of lobsters right through the supply chain to market.

It's clear then that GFC fishermen are doing more to protect the quality of their catches by ensuring on-board live tanks are supplied at all times with adequate clean water and aeration, reducing drain times before landing, and protecting their catches from exposure to heat, wind and other adverse conditions. However during the current high-volume period we have seen an increase in second grade landings which for the past week is at an average of 1.6%, double the annual average, so we encourage you to go the extra mile in managing your catch.

So then, to the quality prize winners for the 2017/18 season. Perennial top performers John Labruyere and Steven Chance once again placed in the top 5. They were joined by C Zone fishermen Craig Darby and Graham Mol as place getters this year however they could not top winner Mark "Ernie" Ayling with a record breaking 99.81% premium grade percentage.

Mark is a second generation fisherman and grew up on the West Side of the Wallabies where his father fished for over 50 years. Mark has been fishing for 32 years. He spent his first 16 years fishing the coast before heading back the islands, at Big Pigeon, where he has been for the 16 years.

Mark has featured in the top 5 quality catchers previously but this is his time at the top of the list. Mark says he hasn't added any new practises to improve quality in recent years, he has just made sure that what he and his crew are doing they do well. Clean water through the tanks, sprayers in the cacka box and the use of wet hessian when lobster are on deck are essential according to Mark, however the most critical element is good crew. Mark gives a lot of credit for the great result to his deckie Luc Rayner who has worked for Mark for the past 3 years.



*Mark "Ernie" Ayling (left) with deckie Luc Rayner proudly show off their GFC Quality Catcher Prize*

Rank	Skipper	Boat Name	Premium%
1st	MARK AYLING	WINDSHIFT (A)	99.81%
2nd	JOHN LABRUYERE	WALCHEREN (A)	99.79%
3rd	CRAIG DARBY	SEXSEA (C)	99.73%
4th	GRAEME MOL	KIAMA (C)	99.70%
5th	STEVEN CHANCE	RAMPAGE (B)	99.68%



## The 99% Club

Also back by popular demand is GFC's 99% club, however given that now over three quarters of GFC fishermen deliver above 99% quality we have modified this exclusive group to the 99.5% club of which we had 38 members... an amazing effort given just 2 years ago we only had 4 fishermen hit that mark. Congratulations to all! If we could leave you with just one message out of all of this, it would be to please do everything you can over this high-catch summer period to reduce exposure times on deck and in the cacka box. Keep them in the water as long as you possibly can

Skipper	Premium%
MARK AYLING	99.81%
JOHN LABRUYERE	99.79%
CRAIG DARBY	99.73%
GRAEME MOL	99.70%
STEVEN CHANCE	99.68%
ROB BATEMAN	99.68%
JIM CHANDLER	99.66%
NAT GEDERO	99.66%
LOUIS KRUMMENACHER	99.65%
JOHN SLOAN	99.64%
MARK RALPH	99.64%
STEVEN SIPILA	99.64%
JIM PHILIPPS	99.64%
GREG RAYMOND	99.63%
TYSON LORD	99.63%
KRISTIAN MACDONALD	99.62%
DEON BROWN	99.61%
KRIS CARLBERG	99.61%
SAM & JESS LIDDON	99.61%
KIM MIRAGLIOTTA	99.59%
MATHEW BUMBAK	99.59%
RUSSELL DRURY	99.58%
RUSSELL MANKELow	99.58%
RADLEY WOODCOCK	99.58%
RICKI MOUCHEMORE	99.56%
BUTCH MADDREN	99.56%
PETER ARMSTRONG	99.56%
KODY BURNETT	99.56%
BRENDAN CROFT	99.55%
PAUL STARLING	99.55%
JOE GRAZIANO	99.54%
TODD NEWBY	99.53%
NEVILLE TESTER	99.53%
MATT KALAJZICH	99.53%
IVAN DAWE	99.53%
GREG COLE	99.53%
DENIS AKERSTROM	99.52%
WAYNE SMITH	99.52%

## Committed to Communicate

GFC is committed to ensuring we continue to lead the industry in communicating and engaging with its member owners. One of the most effective ways of doing this is GFC's annual round of fishermen BBQ's. Our BBQ's are an excellent opportunity for us to relay information, discuss issues and to answer your questions about important GFC and industry topics in a non-formal setting. We encourage all members to take the opportunity to come along and engage with GFC staff, directors and your fellow GFC owners. BBQ's will commence later this month in Fremantle and Geraldton. Light refreshments will be provided. Save the following dates and we will update you on start times and venues soon.

**Monday 19th February – Fremantle**  
**Wednesday 21st February - Geraldton**

## Expressions of Interest



Western  
**Rock  
 Lobster**

World leading sustainable fishery

Western Rock Lobster are seeking 5 young active skippers to become members of a committee that will assess then recommend any industry rules and regulations that should be relaxed, removed or changed to make fishing operations easier and fishery management better. If you would like more information on this fantastic opportunity visit the WRL website [here](http://www.westernrocklobster.com.au).





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## Marine Store

More member specials in-store!

# ANOTHER CONTAINER OF ROPE HAS JUST ARRIVED!!

Since the Co-op Marine Store commenced importing Hard Lay PP (poly propylene) rope October 2014 and then the FIRM lay being added in November 2015 the feedback from fishermen has been nothing but positive.

Hard lay comes in 11mm and 12mm:

Yellow, Green and Red

FIRM Lay comes in 11mm, 12mm and 14mm

Yellow/Orange, Green/Orange and Red/Orange

We also stock the FIRM Lay in 11mm Blue/Orange

"Remember Candy Rope?? We stock the real original 12mm one made in NZ

## Strong rope, good price and coils great!



**GFC Members  
receive a  
10% rebate!**

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