

Guide to caring for yabbies

Yabbies are a popular bait for recreational fishers in Victoria.

The Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) has commenced a two-year trial of a permit-based fishery to increase the supply of live bait yabbies (*Cherax destructor*) for recreational fishing.

Permit holders will be authorised to collect and transport live yabbies directly to the point of sale (e.g. to bait and tackle shops) or to hold up to 500 yabbies at their normal place of residence, until they can be sold.

This guide outlines the minimum animal welfare and care requirements for permit holders and bait and tackle shop owners who may keep yabbies for sale under the trial.

By complying with these requirements, you will improve the welfare of yabbies and ensure only the best quality bait yabbies are sold.

Getting ready

It's important to be ready to care for live yabbies before bringing them home or before placing them into a tackle or bait shop.

Permit holders and bait and tackle shop owners need to be able to:

- handle and transport yabbies carefully;
- provide suitable holding facilities; and
- care for yabbies to keep them alive and healthy.

Caring for yabbies takes time and commitment. If you aren't able to meet their care requirements, please do not attempt to keep yabbies at home or in your shop.

Handling and transporting yabbies

Handling of yabbies should be kept to a minimum during harvesting and when moving them from one location to another. When handling yabbies, they should be picked up by their carapace, behind their claws. This is the best place for the yabby and will avoid getting your fingers nipped!



Common yabby (*Cherax destructor*)

When transporting yabbies, please place them in moist packing material that has been soaked in clean water.

Holding facilities at your home or shop

If you have lots of yabbies in one tank, they may fight each other, as they are territorial. This can cause them stress and even injury.

To avoid this, try to keep yabbies of the same size or sort them by size into different tanks.

Yabbies breathe oxygen from the water, the same as fish, so an air pump or aerator is a good option to keep the water well oxygenated, especially in the warmer months.

If the holding facility or tank is situated outside, please make sure it's located in a quiet position, out of direct sunlight.

Care requirements

Feeding

If you hold yabbies for more than 2 days, they should be fed an appropriate diet to support their health and wellbeing.

Yabbies are omnivores and will eat a variety of foods, including leafy greens (spinach, lettuce), vegetables (carrots, pumpkin, potato peels) and occasional protein treats like bloodworms or sinking fish food. Sinking commercial yabby pellets can also be provided.

Feed your yabbies every two to three days but avoid overfeeding, as excess food can pollute the water and lead to health problems. Remove any uneaten food to prevent water contamination.

Also remove any yabbies that die as these can quickly pollute the water and cause other problems.

Cleaning your holding facility or tank

To keep your tank clean, you will need to change your water regularly.

By following these simple guidelines, you can ensure your yabbies stay alive and healthy and can become quality baits for big fish

