

# Situation Report

Event:	Detection of POMS (OsHv-1) in St Helens Pacific oysters leases		
Report Details:	Situation Report: #4	21.02.24	As at 14:00
Prepared by:	Jennifer Voss		
Approved by:	Kevin de Witte CVO		
<div> <div>?</div> <div>C U R R E N T S I T U A T I O N</div> </div> <p><b><i>*Bold items indicate recent events since previous situation report</i></b></p> <p><b><u>20/02/2024</u></b>: feral oysters submitted. Feral oysters from two sites (see map for St Helens) were found to be positive for OsHV-1, third site analysis pending</p> <p><b><u>21/02/2024</u></b>: feral oysters submitted from third were found to be positive. It is important to note, that no further positives have been detected from any other trace premise, at-risk premise, hatchery, or nursery.</p> <p><u>9/2/2024</u> - 50-60% mortality reported in Pacific Oysters (originally sourced from Tasmanian Oyster Company; owner reports prior to mortality event these had been the best performing oyster on the lease) in Hodgman's Spit Zone 1 Georges Bay. Zone 1 is broken up into 4 enterprises. Since February 4, 2024, all farms within this zone had observed mortalities. There were no unusual morbidities prior to February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024.</p> <p><u>13/2/2024</u> - The presence of Ostreid Herpesvirus-1 (OsHV-1) which causes Pacific oyster mortality syndrome (POMS) was confirmed by PCR testing for St Georges Bay, St Helens</p> <p>This is the first record of the disease in this bay, which was previously classified as POMS free.</p> <p>A submission, on behalf of three growers at Hodgman's Spit, submitted samples of both farmed oysters, as well as feral oysters located close to the lease site. Other parts of the bay are not yet shown to be affected.</p>			

On CVO request, the POMS status for the whole of St Helens Bay area (Georges Bay and Moulting Bay), has been reclassified as 'infected'.

13/2/2024 evening - A revised Group Permit was published on the NRE web page. The reclassification means that live oysters or oyster equipment may not be moved from St Helens to any area of POMS intermediate or free status.

The original concern was reported in 10-30 mm Triploid oysters, with laboratory results indicating high levels of virus present. Triploid oysters are thought to be particularly susceptible to this virus.

Mature feral oysters in the immediate area also tested positive on PCR.

Recent high temperatures and corresponding low tides provided stress factors which are likely contributing factors to the clinical expression of disease.

The CVO has provided initial briefing to General Manager, Acting Deputy Secretary and representatives of Marine Resources Division.

The CVO briefs Duncan Spender, CEO Oysters Tasmania (OT), verbally and by email on a daily basis.

14/2/2024 Relevant staff from Animal Biosecurity & Welfare Branch (ABWB) formed a desktop incident management team to respond to the spread of the endemic aquatic virus OsHV-1, to an area previously unaffected by the disease POMS.

Tracing operations are underway to determine movements into, out of, and within St Helens OT has briefed oyster growers and hatchery operators throughout Tasmania on the situation by email on 14 February.

15/2/2024 Tracing and surveillance of lease sites performed (see results table)

16/2/2024 Tracing and surveillance of lease sites performed (see results table)

19/2/2024 submissions of animals from St Helens ARP (at risk premise) and southeast ARP are pending. Results of testing from St Helens hatchery, and tracing sites determined during tracing efforts (14/2-16/2) in St Helens, Smithton, and southeast Tasmania are all negative. Feral oyster samples are in transit from St Helens. Feral oysters, collected from three sites located close to the original infected premise in southwest Georges Bay, are in transit for analysis.

Mortalities have been observed on two lease sites located in Moulting Bay

\*The date of last detection is provided here as an indication of progress of the response. This does not provide a prediction of when return to freedom may occur.

**Site Status Count – 21-2-2024 12:00**

	St Helens	Smithton	EHN/ Norfolk Bay			
Infected (IP)	1					
Dangerous contact premise (DCP)	1					
Trace (TP)	3 (3)	(2)	(3)			
At Risk Premise (ARP)	7 (1)		2			
Not Assessed (NA)						
Suspect (SP)						
Unknown (UNK)		10				
Assessed Negative (AN)	4	2	3			
Total Properties	12	12	5			

Definitions:

AN – sites that have returned negative results for POMS; DCP (Dangerous contact premise) – likely to be infected due to proximity to an IP; TP – at risk of infection due to connection to an IP; IP – infected premises confirmed by laboratory test results to be infected with POMS; ARP (At risk premise) – has susceptible stock but no known connection with IP SP – suspect premises that might be infected; UNK – lack of information on property;

\*(#) denotes sites which have been tested

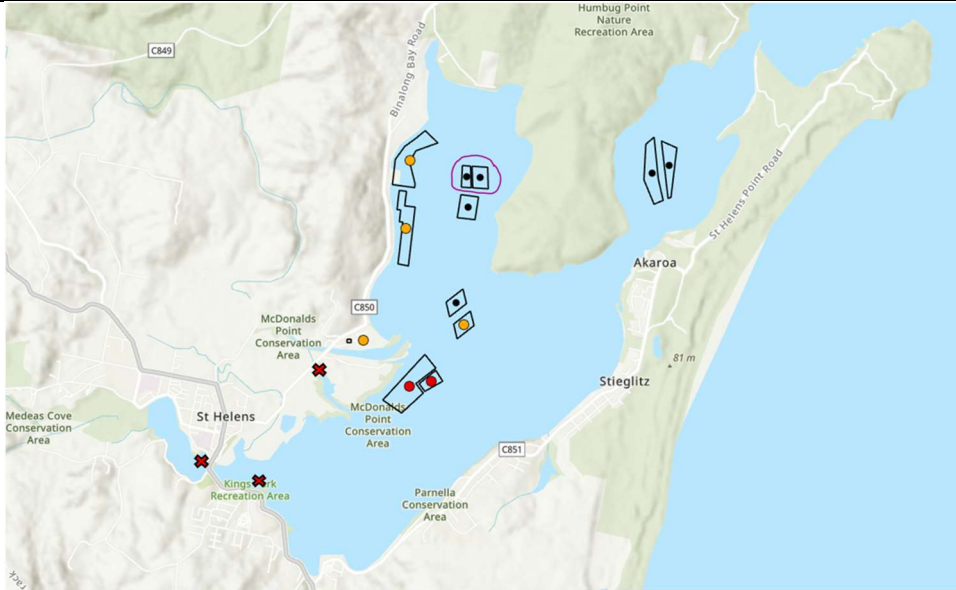
Laboratory testing as of 12 midday 21/2/2024:

Submission ID	Date received	Company	Location	Detail	Status	qPCR POM result
	12.02.24		St Helens		closed	Positive

		15.02.24		St Helens		Closed	Negative
		15.02.24		St Helens		Closed	Negative
		15.02.24		St Helens		Closed	Negative
		15.02.24		Big Bay		Closed	Negative
		15.02.24		Dunalley		Further testing may be warranted	Negative
		15.02.24		Newman Creek		Further testing may be warranted	Negative
		15.02.24		Smithton		Testing underway	Negative
		16.02.24		Dunalley		Further testing may be warranted	Negative
		16.02.24		EHN/Norfolk Bay		Further testing may be warranted	Negative
		16.02.24		St Helens		Further testing may be warranted	Negative
		20.02.24		EHN/Norfolk Bay		Further testing may be warranted	Negative
		20.02.24		St Helens	Ferals collected from southern St Helens		Positive
		20.02.24		St Helens	Ferals collected from southern St Helens		Positive
		20.02.24		St Helens	Ferals collected from southern St Helens		Positive

\*cells blackened to maintain confidentiality

**Figure 1: St Helens sites**



Red circle =infected premise

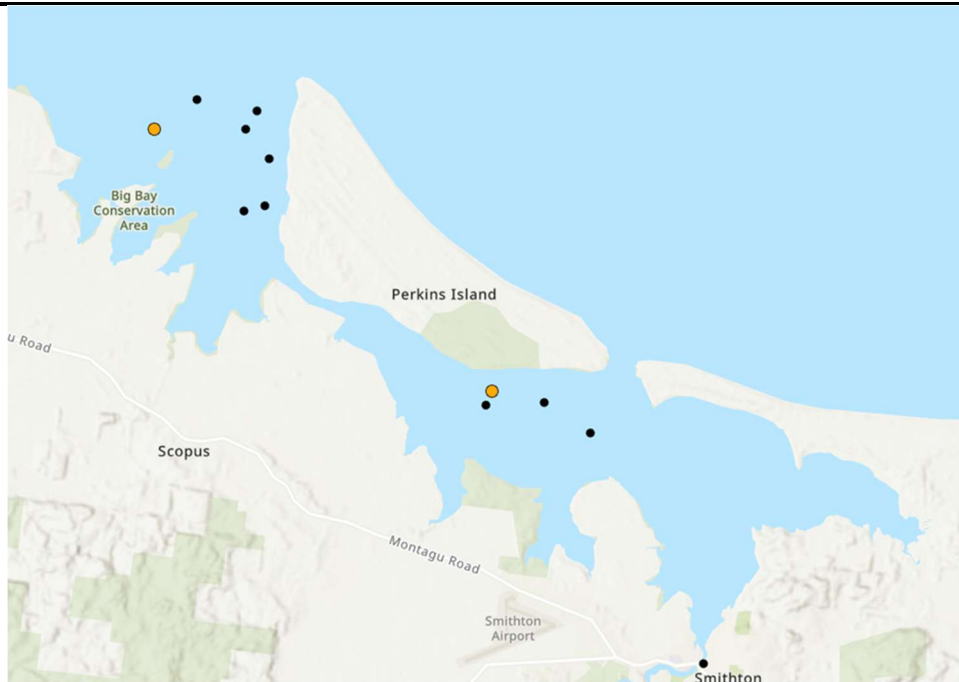
Red X = infected feral oysters

Orange = tested negative

Black = remaining ARP

Purple Circle = oyster mortalities observed on leases

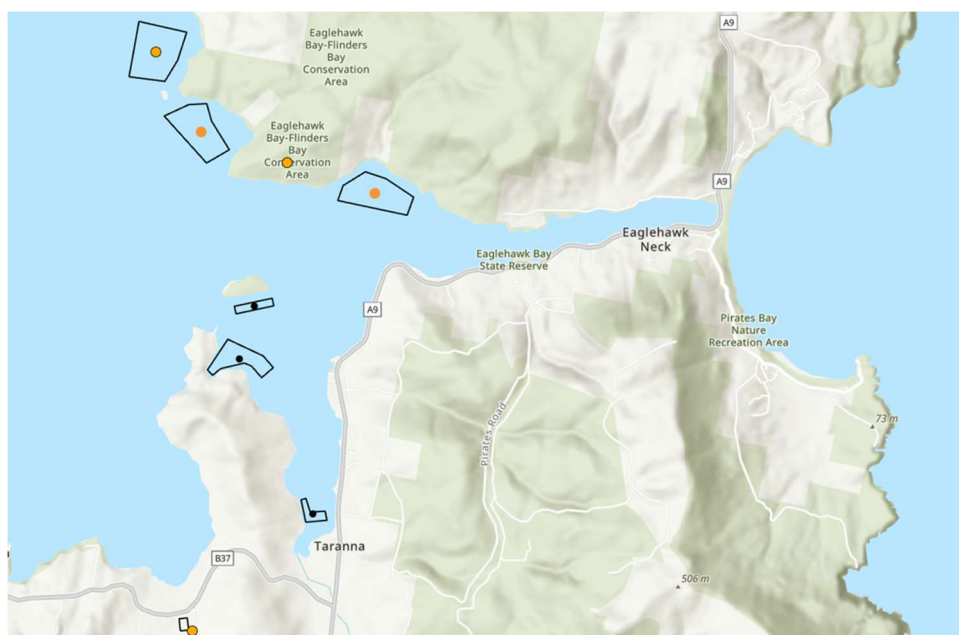
**Figure 2: Smithton sites**



Orange = tested negative

Black = remaining ARP

**Figure 3: Eaglehawk Neck/Norfolk Bay Sites**



Orange = tested negative

Black = remaining ARP



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- NRE is the lead agency for the response, working closely with the Tasmanian peak industry body. The incident is currently operating at as a Level 1 (desktop response by ABWB)



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The aim of the response is to:

- Determine the extent of increase in range of POMS infected areas
- Estimate the risk of spread to other POMS free areas in Tasmania
- Prevent further spread if possible
- Coordinate with Oysters Tasmania and industry members on the future of POMS control program for Tasmania
- Ascertain disease source if possible



EXECUTION  
(reporting against  
IAP tasks)

*Summarise the main actions that have been undertaken*

4.1 ICC name			
	Task & Responsibility	Item	Status
1.	Incident Control		Ongoing/ completed/ suspended

	2.			
	3.	<b>Planning</b>	Draft and distribute SitRep #5	ongoing
	4.		Spreadsheet system to track response – <b>premises and classification, and tracing</b>	<b>Completed and ongoing updates as appropriate</b>
	5.		<p>Surveillance plan (with options and costings)</p> <p>Passive surveillance - Investigation of mortalities</p> <p><b>Tracing of movements into free areas from 1.11.2023</b></p> <p>Analysis of virus distribution in St Helens</p> <p>Tracing of secondary movements from potentially exposed leases into intermediate and free areas</p>	ongoing
	6.		<p>Mapping</p> <p>Google earth aquatic lease tool uploaded to Teams</p> <p>ArcGIS maps – JV has developed with site statuses</p>	ongoing



			Word document with historic leases and ownership uploaded to Teams	
	7.		Legal Draft Individual Biosecurity Directions to stop movement if need be	ongoing
	8.	<b>Operations</b>	Draft and publish revised Group Permit – reclassify St Helens as infected	completed
	9.		Tracing of oyster movements from St Helens since 1/1/24 (priority), and in final 6 months of 2023 as a secondary priority. To free areas To intermediate areas conversation with all TP's ASAP. Tracing conversations summarised on spreadsheet on Teams Contact made with all producers in Smithton, St Helens, Port	Ongoing *pending response from some producers

			Sorell and Norfolk Bay	
	10.		Review Hatchery individual permits and update	Ongoing
	11.	<b>Logistics</b>	Surveillance and testing budget	ongoing
	12.			
	13.	<b>Safety</b>		
	14.			
	15.	<b>Communications</b>	Oyster peak industry body informed by email	completed
	16.		Oyster growers provided initial situation update by OT	complete
	17.		<b>Draft communications plan</b> Briefing of NRE executive and Minister Biosecurity Advisory <b>Web page updates and information for oyster growers update on NRE website</b> Industry and community liaison	<b>Complete</b>  <b>MR24/217</b>  <b>Ongoing</b>

## ? ISSUES

- There is no testing budget for surveillance. Most testing costs are being covered by growers. There is a requirement for a response fund to cover testing costs that can't be covered by producers, e.g. feral oysters in vicinity of a DCP. Current unfunded test costs commitment by the branch is around \$3,500.
- **Unfunded test costs committed by the branch has *exceeded* \$3,500.**
- **It has been determined the Smithton POMS classification will not change as a response to St Helens detection. Instead, growers are advised to remain vigilant to unexplained morbidity and mortalities and asked to voluntarily stop movements of oysters and oyster equipment out of Smithton.**
- AHL has defined PCR testing capacity. Industry requested testing (industry funded) will be a secondary priority at AHL.
- Initial testing is based on 30 oysters in pools of 5 (6 tests). This regime may not be adequate to assure freedom. Discussions on freedom assurance testing is progressing.
- Determining risk and classification of bays containing trace premises is progressing.
- **Industry has requested guidance on surveillance options for Smithton growing areas. The branch will provide industry with international guidelines RE testing and surveillance for declaring aquatic areas free of a pest or disease, and other options for surveillance and management. Any such surveillance costs for Smithton would need to be funded by industry.**
- Allied to this – discussion on resolving suspect status of free and intermediate areas that received oysters in the trace period.
- At this time the focus is on 2024 but the index case date may be a lot earlier and may not be established. February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021 is the current index date.
- Communications plan development targeting industry members and government.
- Further POMS detections in other intermediate and free areas.
- **Is an ongoing POMS control program by industry feasible? Surveillance options and known disease parameters to be**

provided by the branch. Industry to decide how to manage the endemic disease of OsHV-1 in Tasmania.	
WHS ISSUES	nil
ORGANISATION	See Appendix 1 for the current Incident Management Team
PREDICTED SITUATION	Depends on laboratory results for POMS PCR tests. Origin and timing of infection is not yet determined and may not be further established.
NEXT REPORT:	The next Situation Report to be issued <i>tentatively on 26/2/24, unless new detections or unusual mortalities reported.</i>
DISTRIBUTED (VIA EMAIL)	Ian Dutton (A/Dep Sec) , Rae Burrows (GM BT), Chavelli Sulikowski, Edward Forbes, Eric Brain (Aquaculture branch), BT Managers, AB&W branch, AHL pathologists.