Handling Living Marine Organisms

Activity scope
This document relates to curriculum activities in which students handle living marine organisms, including any plants or animals whose natural environment is marine. It includes student involvement in investigation (including field experience), dissection or preparation for consumption of any such organism.

Minimum activity-specific qualifications
- At least one adult present should hold a senior first aid certificate.
- Two adults should be present when handling marine organisms that pose an extreme risk level.

Low and Medium risk levels (i.e. marine creatures regarded as not dangerous to people; marine creatures that if handled correctly offer minimal danger)
- An adult with Competence (demonstrated ability/experience) in handling marine creatures.

High risk level (marine creatures that cannot be handled without a high level risk and/or may cause non-fatal injury)
- For a registered teacher, competence (demonstrated ability/experience) with marine creatures, OR
- For a leader other than a registered teacher, a high level of competence (demonstrated ability/experience) in handling marine creatures if a registered teacher with this experience is not available.

Extreme risk level (marine creatures that cannot be handled without a high level risk and/or may cause fatal injury)
- An adult with expertise (formal qualifications) with living marine organisms.

Minimum activity-specific equipment/facilities
- Gloves should be worn as personal protective equipment, and tongs used where appropriate.
- Enclosed shoes should be worn.
- Locally identified safety items, e.g. vinegar, hot water, cold water, ice packs.
- Field guides, charts and keys made available to ensure correct species identification.
- Hygiene facilities should be available if food is being prepared for human consumption (refer to Food Handling guidelines).
- First aid equipment and consumable items appropriate to the level of risk.

Activity-specific hazards/risks and suggested control measures
- Students should not handle organisms that cannot be positively identified by the supervisor. If it is necessary to handle an organism that is identified as having hazardous defence mechanisms, appropriate protection (e.g. tongs or leather gloves) and handling techniques should be used.
- Many marine creatures’ spines and/or fangs may inject poison. Some spines may break off and cause infection. Stings of marine organisms may cause irritation (the effects can vary from person to person). Handling or contact should be avoided and protective equipment should be used.
- In extreme situations, the dangerous creatures should be isolated from the students.
- The flesh of some species is poisonous. Each species should be identified by an expert as being suitable for human consumption before it is eaten, and appropriate cleaning and preparation completed.
- Any wound in the marine environment and minor bites from marine organisms should be treated for infection.
- Provide instruction in the correct use of any equipment before the activity begins.
Useful activity-specific links

- Animal Use in Queensland State Schools
  

- Food Handling – Curriculum Activity Risk Assessment guideline
  

- Marine Teachers’ Association of Queensland
  
  [link](http://www.marineteachers.org.au/)

- Information on types of poisoning and treatment is available from the Queensland Poisons Information Centre, phone 13 11 26.

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