

Campaigners celebrate animal welfare win to ban boiling crabs and lobsters alive

Monday 22 December, 2025

Animal welfare organisation Crustacean Compassion has welcomed today's announcement in the Government's published Animal Welfare Strategy that live boiling of lobsters and crabs 'is not an acceptable killing method'.

- Defra set to back a ban live boiling of lobsters and crabs under UK law.
- Guidance on methods of killing to be clarified in animal welfare action plan
- Decapod crustaceans recognised as sentient in 2022, meaning they can feel pain.
- Humane alternative: electrical stunning before slaughter.

In today's Animal Welfare Strategy, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has confirmed that it will be issuing new guidance to prohibit live boiling of conscious crustaceans like crabs and lobsters. The move follows years of research, campaigning and public advocacy led by Crustacean Compassion, which has long called for stronger protections for these sentient animals.

Chief Executive of Crustacean Compassion Dr Ben Sturgeon said,

"We wholeheartedly welcome the Government's intentions to ban the live boiling of conscious crustaceans and address other areas of welfare compromise. Recognising the sentience of crabs, lobsters, and other decapod crustaceans, and banning inhumane practices like live boiling, is a vital step forward for animal welfare. When live, conscious decapod crustaceans are placed into a pot of boiling water, they endure several minutes of excruciating pain before they die. This is torture for crabs and lobsters and is completely avoidable.

Throughout the supply chain humane alternatives, such as electrical stunning prior to slaughter, are readily available and ensure these animals are killed swiftly and without unnecessary suffering. This guidance will give both industry and consumers the clarity and tools they need to treat these animals with the respect they deserve. Today's announcement is a positive step forward for lobsters and crabs."

Decapod crustacean animals like crabs, lobsters, and prawns were recognised as being able to feel pain through robust scientific evidence back in 2022 and since then campaigners have been calling for stronger protection to follow. Defra and the seafood industry have been working to provide humane practices across the supply chain, in line with rising consumer demand and commercial pressure.

Dr Sturgeon continues, *"Today's announcement shows what's possible when science, public compassion and sustained advocacy come together," added Dr Sturgeon, "We're proud of this achievement, and we're even more motivated to continue improving protections for crustaceans in other areas."*

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Crustacean Compassion

E. info@crustaceancompassion.org

W. <https://www.crustaceancompassion.org.uk>

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