Industry and welfare groups unite to support transition away from live boiling

Tuesday 23 December, 2025

Seafood companies trading in decapod crustaceans are facing a changing legal landscape, as the UK Government has confirmed in its newly published Animal Welfare Strategy that live boiling killing methods for crabs and lobsters such as are “not acceptable.”

Animal welfare organisation **Crustacean Compassion** has welcomed this clarification and is working with industry partners to provide practical, sustainable solutions to support the transition to higher welfare standards and kitchens without live, conscious boiling.

Dr Ben Sturgeon, CEO of Crustacean Compassion says: *“This is a clear signal that the days of boiling crabs and lobsters alive are numbered. It’s an important step toward ending unnecessary suffering and creating a future where humane practices are the norm.”*

Kinder Kitchens: supporting chefs through change

Earlier this year, Crustacean Compassion launched its Kinder Kitchen initiative, in collaboration with **The Chefs’ Forum**, helping chefs and restaurants move towards more humane practices. The project educates the hospitality sector on high-welfare practices including electrical stunning, storage and handling. Building on the success of its earlier webinar on crustacean welfare, Crustacean Compassion and The Chefs’ Forum will host a training workshop for seafood chefs in the new year.

Catherine Farinha, Founder, The Chefs’ Forum says: *“The Chefs’ Forum is proud to be working closely with Crustacean Compassion through the Kinder Kitchens initiative, to support positive change across the foodservice sector. Building on this collaboration, we will be launching a dedicated training programme early in the new year, designed to support industry operators with practical guidance and knowledge as they embed higher welfare standards into their kitchens.”*

Best practice electrical stunning

In addition to this, they have been working with **Mitchell and Cooper**, manufacturers of the tabletop electrical stunning machinery for crustaceans, to encourage its adoption in commercial kitchens by offering free trial rental periods.

Kat Cooper, Project Director, Mitchell & Cooper Ltd. says: *"Mitchell & Cooper has worked with the industry for many years in the development and validation of electrical stunning as a humane, repeatable, and operationally robust method for crustacean dispatch. The science is clear: rapid electrical stunning, delivering consistent outcomes without reliance on operator skill. We are helping chefs adopt higher welfare standards without disrupting workflow. Whilst improving product quality and customer confidence at the same time. We look forward to continuing to support the industry in creating an ethical and affordable product."*

Merrick Webber - chef leadership in action

Renowned chef **Merrick Webber**
recently completed the Kinder Kitchens electrical stunning trial, marking a significant step toward improving crustacean welfare in professional kitchens. Merrick’s experience demonstrates that electrical stunning is not only humane but also practical and enhances quality. As a proud Chef Ambassador for Crustacean Compassion and Kinder Kitchens, Merrick is calling on fellow chefs to embrace this positive change and help lead the industry toward higher welfare standards.

Merrick says: *“I recently completed the Kinder Kitchens electrical stunning trial with Crustacean Compassion and Mitchell & Cooper because I wanted to be part of a positive change in our industry. Chefs have a responsibility to understand evolving welfare standards for sentient animals like crustaceans and lead the way in ethical seafood practices. During the trial, I saw that electrical stunning is practical and improves quality - the lobster and crab meat was noticeably plumper, and guests even commented it was the best they’d ever eaten. We’ve had no negative reactions; in fact, several diners who previously avoided lobster chose to order it after learning about the humane process. This isn’t just about ethics; it’s about raising standards and creating a better experience for everyone."*

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New guidance supports a brighter future for British seafood

Following Defra's announcement, industry leaders now have a responsibility to make sure all businesses understand their obligations and embrace humane practices.

Dr Ben Sturgeon, Chief Executive of Crustacean Compassion, continued: *"Some companies - from fishers through to supermarkets - have shown great dedication to improving welfare for crustaceans, but on a voluntary basis. No food system can be truly sustainable without high animal welfare standards. By clarifying that live boiling is unacceptable and committing to guidance, ministers have given the UK seafood industry a level playing field and the opportunity to lead globally on welfare."*

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