

MUD CRAB FATTENING



Dr. P. SANTHANAM

Assistant Professor

Marine Planktonology & Aquaculture Lab.,

Department of Marine Science, School of Marine Sciences

Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli-620 024, Tamil Nadu.

E-mail: santhanam@bdu.ac.in

Website: www.mpalbdu.weebly.com

MUD CRAB FATTENING

Soft shelled crabs are reared for a period of a few weeks till their exoskeleton gets hardened. These 'hard' crabs are locally known as "mud" (meat) and fetch three to four times better price than the soft crabs.

Fattening in ponds

- Fattening can be done in small tidal ponds between 0.025-0.2 ha with a water depth of 1 to 1.5 m.
- Before stocking the soft crabs in the pond, the bottom is prepared by draining the pond water, sun-drying and adding sufficient quantity of lime.
- Care is taken in strengthening the pond bunds without any holes and crevices. Special care is taken in the sluice area as these crabs have a tendency to escape through nearby areas of sluice gate. The inlet areas should be reinforced with bamboo matting inside the bund.
- The ponds are fenced properly using bamboo poles and nets along the sides of the bund, which incline towards the pond to prevent the escape of crabs.
- Soft crabs collected from local fishermen/crab merchants are stocked in the ponds preferably in the morning hours @ 0.5-2 crabs/m² according to the size of the crabs.

Fattening in ponds

- For crabs of 550g and above, market demand is more. Hence it is ideal to stock crabs belonging to this size group. In this case, the stocking density should not be more than 1 crab/m².
- Depending upon the location and availability of water crabs, 6-8 cycles of "fattening" can be carried out in a pond by repetitive stocking and harvesting.
- If the culture pond is big, it is better to divide the pond into different compartments of suitable sizes for stocking crabs of uniform sizes in the same compartment. This is good for manipulating the feeding and is easy to monitor and harvest.
- When the interval between stockings is wide, crabs of similar sizes can be stocked in one compartment.
- Sex-wise stocking in compartments is advantageous to reduce the attacks from more aggressive male crabs. It's better to provide shelters like old tyres, bamboo baskets, tiles etc. to minimize mutual attacks and cannibalism.

Fattening in pens and cages

- Fattening also can be carried out in pens, floating net cages or bamboo cages in shallow estuarine waterways and inside large shrimp ponds with good tidal water influx.
- HDPE, netlon or bamboo splits can be used as the netting material.
- The size of the cage shall be preferably 3 m x 2 m x 1 m.
- The cages have to be arranged in a row so that feeding and monitoring can be easily carried out.

Fattening in pens and cages

- A stocking of 10 crab/m² in cages and 5 crabs/m² for pens is recommended. Since the stocking rate is higher in cages, and to minimize the mutual attacks, the tips of the chelae can be removed while stocking.
- However, these methods are not commercialized like 'fattening' in ponds.

Culture

- Mud crabs are omnivorous and they feed on a wide variety of food items.
- They feed preferably on mollusk, crabs, slow moving animals, small fish, shrimps, brown mussel meat and trash fish.
- The crabs are fed 10% of the crab biomass per day when the mean carapace length is $<6\text{cm}$ and 5% when $>6\text{cm}$ with 40% of the daily feed ration given at around 7.30 am and 60% given at around 5 pm.
- The fattening duration was about 20-30 days.
- Crabs may be harvested totally at the end of 20 to 30 days culture by hand picking method.
- Harvested crabs were immediately placed in a moist and shady, cool place and transported to the market.

Crab fattening



Courtesy to M S Swaminathan Research Foundation

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