



November 2025



Zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*)

Zebra mussel is a small freshwater mollusc native to Eastern Europe and Western Russia which has spread widely across North America and parts of Europe.

Zebra mussel is not currently established in Australia and is listed as a higher-risk species on the [Exotic Environmental Pest List](#).

Keeping Australia free of zebra mussel is vital to protecting our aquatic ecosystems, infrastructure and way of life.

How it could impact Australia

If zebra mussel becomes established in Australia, there could be severe consequences.

Zebra mussel could:

- alter aquatic ecosystems by outcompeting native aquatic species
- disrupt food chains and nutrient cycles, impacting fisheries
- clog water infrastructure, including irrigation, hydroelectric and water treatment systems

What it looks like

Zebra mussels are:

- small and fingernail-sized, but can be as small as 1mm and grow up to 50mm long
- usually marked by distinctive brown or black zigzag stripes across the pale shells.



LEFT: Zebra mussel on a marimo moss ball. **RIGHT:** Adult zebra mussels. (Images: US Geological Survey)

Zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*)

Where it might be found

Zebra mussel can establish in freshwater to brackish environments, including slow-moving rivers, lakes, reservoirs, estuaries, canals, irrigation systems, aquariums and ornamental ponds. Zebra mussel reproduces rapidly and releases microscopic larvae, and forms dense clusters or colonies on hard surfaces.

Zebra mussel is not found in Australian waterways, however adults and larvae could spread through movement of:

- aquarium and pond tank water, substrates, decorations, aquatic plants and disposal or dumping of these materials
- watercraft and fishing gear, including boat hulls, trailers, motors and nets
- ballast water.

What to do if you see it

If you think you've spotted zebra mussel:

- Do not move it
- Take a photo if safe to do so
- Report it immediately to your local state or territory aquatic biosecurity team. List of state and territory contacts available at agriculture.gov.au/zebra-mussel
- Alternatively, call the **See. Secure. Report** hotline on **1800 798 636** or report online at www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/report



Your vigilance and support are vital in preventing the spread of invasive species. Thank you for helping us to protect Australia's environment and way of life.

More information

- [Zebra mussel](https://agriculture.gov.au/zebra-mussel) agriculture.gov.au/zebra-mussel
- [Exotic Environmental Pest List](https://agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/policy/environmental/priority-list) agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/policy/environmental/priority-list
- Email ACEBO@aff.gov.au

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

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