



# Biosecurity alert: Zebra mussel

*(Dreissena polymorpha)*

## The pest and its impacts

The zebra mussel is a small invasive freshwater mollusc. It has been transported around the world via ballast water and the aquarium trade.

Zebra mussels grow and reproduce quickly. They can tolerate a range of salinities, from ponds to estuaries, and spread by microscopic free-swimming larvae that can rapidly invade habitats.

Don't be fooled by their size, these pests can cause significant damage to the environment, infrastructure and boats. They change the environment by creating reef-like structures that alter the bottom of the water bodies, often rendering beaches unusable.

In Australia, zebra mussels are listed as a high risk exotic pest and have potential to become a major pest in Western Australia, where it could displace native mussels, impact water quality, disturb habitats and damage water infrastructure due to its ability to block pipework.





## LOOK for this pest

Zebra mussels can be identified by having distinct, triangular shells, with the ability to sit flat on their ventral side. The shell typically features dark and light zebra or zig-zag patterning. They are small, typically growing to a size of 10 mm – 40 mm.

Adult zebra mussels can stay alive for several days outside of water and are known hitchhikers on aquatic plants and fish. In 2025, there were two detections of single zebra mussels in Australia. The mussels were deceased and attached to marimo moss balls (*Aegagrophila linnaei*), a live, freshwater algae used in aquarium displays.

This species has not been reported in Australia before and neither zebra mussel or marimo moss balls are permitted to be imported into Australia.



Zebra mussel fouling in pipes and on vessel



Marimo moss ball with zebra mussel

## How you can help: look, act, report

- Check for this pest or other unusual shells in your freshwater aquarium or pond.
- Keep your boat and fishing equipment clean and free of fouling.
- Make sure your equipment is dry before moving to a new location.
- Take photos and report if you see anything unusual, particularly if you have recently purchased a Marimo moss ball.



### REPORT your observations

Your reports help protect WA.  
Contact FishWatch 24/7 or submit photos via MyPestGuide®.



Scan to report via MyPestGuide®



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