

Brown bullhead catfish

Ameiurus nebulosus

Description

Colour: Catfish are dark brown to olive green colour with paler sides and creamy bellies.

Size: Catfish grow to a length of 500 mm.

Body: Catfish have a thick body and flattened head with a distinct hump behind the head.

Skin: The skin is thick and leathery with a layer of mucous. Scales are absent.

Head: Four pairs of barbels are present around the mouth, with a single long one at each corner of the mouth, a pair in front of the eyes on the snout, and two pairs beneath the chin.

Fins: The leading edge on their dorsal and pectoral fins has a sharp toxic spine.

Origin

Native to North America. Introduced into New Zealand in 1877.

Where are catfish found?

Catfish are generally found in slow or still freshwater environments though they are adaptable and can inhabit most freshwater systems. They can survive for very long periods out of water and are tolerant of poor quality environments.

Currently present throughout the Waikato River and Lake Taupō, as well as small isolated populations throughout the North and South Island.

Catfish are not thought to be present in the Bay of Plenty region currently though numerous reports have been received and investigated.



How do catfish spread?

Catfish may move to connected waterways.

People may accidentally or deliberately spread fish to other waterways or private ponds.

Catfish can be spread by eggs or live transfer; cases exist of live catfish being transported in hollow sections of boat trailers or via fyke nets used for eeling.

Why are catfish a problem?

Catfish are adaptive indiscriminate feeders; they eat a variety of prey including insect larvae, crustaceans, molluscs and small fish. Their adaptability and tolerance to a wide range of environmental conditions means they could establish populations in most water bodies.

Status as a pest animal in the Bay of Plenty

Eradication/Exclusion Pest Animal (refer to the Bay of Plenty Regional Council Regional Pest Management Plan).

Rules require land occupiers to destroy all catfish in any pond or waterway (eradication will be led and funded by the Bay of Plenty Regional Council).

It is an offence under sections 52 and 53 of the Biosecurity Act 1993 to sell, offer for sale, display, release, move or breed catfish in the Bay of Plenty region. Serious penalties are associated with distributing catfish in waterways.

How do I get rid of catfish?

Removal of fish from waterways is difficult and requires expert advice. For advice, or to confirm the identity of a fish, call:

- Bay of Plenty Regional Council on 0800 884 880 or email info@boprc.govt.nz
- Your local Department of Conservation office.

For more information contact a Bay of Plenty Regional Council Land Management Officer.

