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FOULING ORGANISMS, PESTS AND PREDATORS OF RAFT CULTURED MUSSELS AND OYSTERS IN THE TRINCOMALEE BAY

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Presently there is a rapidly increasing export market and local consumption of oysters and mussels resulting in a revived interest in culturing them in Sri Lanka. The foulings, pests and predators of bivalves play a significant role in their commercial scale culture. This study records the main fouling

organisms, pests and predators of oysters and mussels cultured in the Trincomalee Bay.

The number and types of fouling organisms settled on asbestos panels (10 x 10cm^2) used for collecting oyster and mussel spat were recorded fortnightly for almost two years commencing April, 1984. Predators and possible pests were collected from the culturing areas and they were identified as far as possible to their generic level.

The main fouling organisms found throughout the year were barnacles (Balanus sp.) with the maximum density of 6000 No/cm^2 during the peak season followed by polychete worms with calciferous tubes and hydroid coelenterate colonies. The fouling by green filamentous algae and brown algae was also considerable. Some crabs and oyster drillers belonging to family Muricidae, were identified as main predators whereas the peanut crabs were found in many malfunctioned oysters as parasites.

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