

AVAILABILITY OF SPAT FOR THE CULTURE OF *PERNA PERNA*

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The brown mussel, *Perna perna* occurs in natural beds off the west coast of Sri Lanka. It is an edible culturable species being successfully cultured commercially in many countries. In Sri Lanka it is collected by local fishermen from the mussel beds for consumption and for sale, but not yet, cultured. A major consideration for its successful culture would be the availability of suitable spat. This study used biweekly-sampled spat-collectors suspended from rafts as well as positioned intertidally adjacent to/on the mussel beds to determine spat abundance and its temporal variation over a period of one year.

Maximum spat availability was from March to April (settlement going upto 11, 184 spat/square meter), availability declining in May (maximum settled numbers at 684 spat/sq.m). Spat became available again, through to a very much lesser extent, from July to September (maximum numbers at 79 spat/sq.m.). There was no overall difference in spat settlement between the intertidal and raft (i.e. subtidal) locations. However, intertidal spat-collectors were washed ashore during periods of intense wave action.

Shell length of settled spat was from 0.4-5.5 mm during March-May. From July - September their lengths increased to between 0.7 and 0.8 mm.

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