

# Those darn crayfish!

Crayfish cause problems in lo'i patches across Hawai'i. Here are some tips on the invasive pests, what they do and how to get rid of them.

**What are crayfish?** Crayfish are freshwater crustaceans that inhabit streams and rivers. They resemble small lobsters or prawns.

**When did they come to Hawai'i?** They were first introduced to Hawai'i in 1923 in kalo patches along Ahuimanu Stream, O'ahu. By 1940, the population of crayfish had increased and become a problem in kalo cultivation.

**What do they do to kalo patches?** Crayfish make tunnels in the mud banks of kalo patches, causing leaks. They also eat the corms of the kalo, making them more susceptible to infection by other organisms.

**What can you do?** The best way to get rid of crayfish in a lo'i is exclusion, or blocking them from the lo'i. The patches can also be lined with plastic to prevent the leakage caused by crayfish. Ducks are another alternative since they eat the crayfish. Kalo Farmer Wili Wood said he bought 21 ducklings to do the job. He also welcomes anyone who wants to take these critters home and prepare them for dinner (yes, it's just like eating lobster!) Wood also catches and ferments them to put into soil as fertilizer.

**Is that why poi is so expensive?** Rising poi prices are mainly because of weather factors, such as arid conditions, wind, excessive rain or cool temperatures. Crayfish are not a huge factor in the pricing of poi statewide.

Sources: Taro: *Mauka to Makai* by University of Hawai'i at Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, Bishop Museum, Wili Wood

