

**ABSTRACT FORM**  
**XVIIIth International Seaweed Symposium**  
**June 20-25 2004**  
**Bergen, Norway**

**Abstract box:**

**EFFECT OF ATTACHMENT STATUS ON ALGAL PALATABILITY.**

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Many species of benthic macroalgae survive after becoming detached from the primary substratum, but relatively little is known about their growth status and their susceptibility to common mesograzers. Herein we examined algal palatability of detached kelps *Lessonia nigrescens* and *Macrocystis integrifolia* from the northern-central coast of Chile. Three experiments were conducted to investigate whether (1) attachment status (algae attached vs. detached) (2) time after detachment and/or (3) direct grazing on detached and attached algae affect algal palatability. In order to examine palatability, feeding assays were carried out after each experiment using fresh algal pieces and artificial food. The attachment status appeared to play an important role on algal defense reaction for *L. nigrescens*. Detached algae previously exposed to grazers were less palatable than grazer-free control algae but no such differences were found in attached algae. The time after detachment had also a significant influence on palatability of *L. nigrescens* but not of *M. integrifolia*. During the first 12 days of detachment, detached *L. nigrescens* was not significantly more palatable than attached conspecifics but thereafter the detached individuals became more palatable. Floating individuals of *M. integrifolia* showed no response to detachment, indicating that this alga is either undefended or maintains its defense after detachment. Our results indicate that large macroalgae may react differently to detachment, possibly depending on their capacity to float.