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California Department of Public Health



GAVIN NEWSOM
Governor

DATE: April 24, 2023

TO: Local Health Officers
Local Communicable Disease Control Officers
Directors of Environmental Health

FROM: Environmental Management Branch and
Infectious Diseases Branch

SUBJECT: ANNUAL MUSSEL QUARANTINE

The Quarantine Order

Enclosed are copies of the 2023 annual mussel quarantine order, in both English and Spanish, issued by Dr. Tomás Aragón, Director and State Health Officer of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). The annual mussel quarantine is for the prevention of paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) and domoic acid poisoning and is in effect from May 1 through October 31. This quarantine applies to all species of mussels harvested for human consumption by the public anywhere on the California coast, including all bays and estuaries. Also enclosed is a document containing a summary of the 2022 monitoring results and background information on the PSP toxins and domoic acid.

Press Releases

CDPH will issue a press release announcing the annual mussel quarantine. Securing media coverage in all counties is important since PSP outbreaks in the past have involved residents of inland counties as well as those along the coast. Your assistance is requested to ensure that this announcement receives coverage in your area.

Placards

Quarantine placards (or the quarantine notice itself) should be placed in conspicuous locations near popular mussel and clam beds within your jurisdiction to warn the public of the PSP and domoic acid hazard. They also should be provided for display at stores, bait shops, dive shops, public parks and access points, and similar locations along the coast.

Reporting of Shellfish Poisoning Illness

PSP and poisoning due to any other marine biotoxins (such as domoic acid) are reportable as food poisoning (Title 17, California Code of Regulations, Sections 2500 and 2574). Even suspected cases of shellfish poisoning in humans should be reported

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immediately by telephone to local health departments and by them to the Division of Communicable Disease Control at (510) 620-3434.

Outreach to Groups at High Risk of Shellfish Poisoning

Special efforts to inform the high-risk Philippine and Southeast Asian communities of shellfish poisoning hazards should be continued. Efforts should be made through whatever channels are available, such as local health department liaison workers and the leaders of local community organizations. Many Southeast Asian and Philippine immigrants are not familiar with PSP, as it may rarely occur in that part of the world. [Mussel quarantine warning signs](#) in Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodian, Laotian, Ilocano, Hmong, and Tagalog are available from the CDPH Environmental Management Branch (EMB).

Shellfish Toxins Monitoring Program

All coastal county health departments are requested to participate in the shellfish biotoxin monitoring program. If illness and deaths from PSP and domoic acid are to be prevented, it is essential to have periodic sampling data, especially along the open coast, where mussels may commonly be harvested despite quarantine warnings.

Coastal mussel samples also are essential because they provide early warning information needed to keep clam beds open during the quarantine period. If an adequate coastal monitoring program is not maintained, it may be necessary to quarantine all species of sport harvested bivalve mollusks, not just mussels, during the May through October period or longer.

Coastal county health authorities also are invited to participate in a volunteer-based phytoplankton monitoring program. Early detection of toxin-producing phytoplankton can alert CDPH to potentially dangerous toxic blooms before shellfish resources are impacted.

How to Sample and Submit Shellfish Specimens for Testing

Each coastal county health department is requested to submit shellfish samples (mussels from the outer coast are preferred) from at least two representative sites, approximately twice per month through October, and once per month during the remaining months, as weather and tidal conditions permit. Please note that at least 200 grams of shellfish meat (approximately one cup) are requested. Shipping containers and [detailed instructions](#) can be obtained by contacting the CDPH EMB Biotoxin Monitoring Program.

You will be notified promptly of laboratory test results if any sample equals or exceeds the federally established "alert" level of 80 micrograms of PSP toxins per 100 grams of shellfish meat or 20 parts per million (ppm) for domoic acid. In addition, all coastal county health departments and other sampling program participants receive monthly and annual reports summarizing shellfish testing results for the entire coast of California.

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Shellfish Information

CDPH maintains an interactive map of the recreational bivalve shellfish health advisories and recent biotoxin results that can be found online at:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/394836318cfe4f7494e1c09097a43559/>

The CDPH Biotoxin Information Line, with recorded updates on shellfish biotoxins and quarantines, is a toll-free telephone number at 1-800-553-4133.

CDPH has developed a “Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQ) for the annual mussel quarantine that can be found online at:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DRSEM/Pages/EMB/Shellfish/Annual-Mussel-Quarantine.aspx>

Additional information about the CDPH Biotoxin Monitoring Program can be found online at:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DRSEM/Pages/EMB/Shellfish/Marine-Biotoxin-Monitoring-Program.aspx>

If you have questions about the annual mussel quarantine or the CDPH Biotoxin Monitoring program, please contact Vanessa Zubkousky-White, coordinator of the EMB Biotoxin Monitoring Program at Vanessa.Zubkousky@cdph.ca.gov or (510) 412-4635; questions about human shellfish poisoning cases may be directed to the Infectious Diseases Branch at (510) 620-3434.



Vanessa Zubkousky-White
Senior Environmental Scientist

Enclosures