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July 18, 2008

DES, DHHS and NH Fish and Game Issue Lobster Tomalley Advisory

CONCORD, NH -- The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, and the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department advise seafood consumers to not eat lobster tomalley, which may contain unsafe levels of "red tide," or Paralytic Shellfish Poison toxin. Tomalley is a soft, green substance found in the body cavity of the lobster. State health experts emphasize that it is safe to eat other lobster meat -- from claws, tails, etc.; this advisory applies only to lobster tomalley.

"Consumers may already be aware of the need to avoid eating "Red tide" contaminated seafood because of recent closures to shellfishing areas," said Chris Nash of the DES Shellfish Program. Red tide is a naturally occurring marine algae that carries a potent neurotoxin; some ocean fish and shellfish such as clams, oysters and mussels accumulate the red tide toxin, making them dangerous for people to eat. Lobsters accumulate the red tide toxin in their tomalley (which acts like a liver/pancreas) from their various food sources. The toxin does not transfer into the meat of the lobster.

The tomalley consumption advisory was prompted by the results from testing conducted on lobsters collected yesterday from the Isles of Shoals. The State of Maine reported elevated levels of red tide toxin in tomalley from some locations earlier this week, and issued a tomalley consumption advisory today. Canada has also issued similar advisories.

"This serves as a reminder that there are certain precautions we all need to take regarding food safety," stated Dr Jose Montero, Director of the Division of Public Health Services at DHHS, "especially in the summer. Part of our mission is to continually educate consumers on safe food handling practices and food consumption."

New Hampshire tidal waters were closed to clam, oyster, and mussel harvesting in May of this year due to particularly high levels of red tide. The State of New Hampshire emphasizes that the lobster tomalley advisory is not a call to suspend lobster harvesting or eating. Rather, it is to help consumers protect themselves from illness while still enjoying a meal of lobster. "People can continue to enjoy their lobster meat and simply push the green portion to the side of their plate," Nash said.

Symptoms of Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning include tingling, burning, numbness, drowsiness, incoherent speech, and respiratory paralysis. Symptoms typically occur within two hours of consumption, and can last a few days in non-lethal cases. Severe cases can result in death by respiratory arrest within 24 hours of consumption, but with prompt medical attention, survivors typically make a full recovery. Anyone who has eaten shellfish or lobster tomalley and experiences these symptoms should seek immediate medical care.

For more information:

- red tide: www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wmb/wmb-13.htm or

- safe food handling: www.dhhs.nh.gov
- Northern New England Poison Control Center Red Tide information -- [click here](#) or call 1-800-222-1222

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