

Red tide spurs shellfish warning

Fort Myers, FL— Lee County Health Department is issuing an advisory against harvesting and eating shellfish due to poisoning from red tide toxins in local waters. Shellfish sold in stores or restaurants are safe to eat.

This week the concentration reached the moderate to high levels in some local waters prompting the shellfishing warning. The Lee County Health Department has been monitoring local outbreaks of red tide alongside regional authorities for two months.

“This is a good time to remind residents and visitors not to pick up and eat mollusks, such as clams, oysters and coquinas, as they contain toxins that cause food poisoning called Neurotoxic Shellfish Poisoning,” said Dr. Judith Hartner, health department director.

Scallops can be eaten if only the scallop’s muscle is eaten, as is normally the case, said Hartner. Scallop stew, which uses the whole animal, should not be eaten. Edible parts of other shellfish such as crabs, shrimp and lobsters are safe to eat.

In addition, people with severe or chronic respiratory conditions such as asthma or chronic lung disease are cautioned to avoid red tide areas. Other individuals may experience varying degrees of eye, nose, and throat irritation while in the area of red tide, but their symptoms usually go away when they leave the affected area.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection Rule 46-26 prohibits the harvest and possession of live shellfish within a half mile from shore.

For more information go to the following websites myfloridaeh.com, RedTideOnline.com, MyFWC.com, MOTE.org, or start1.org.

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