

New Zealand Food Safety issues shellfish biotoxin alert

21 December 2023 | News

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New Zealand Food Safety is advising the public not to collect or consume shellfish gathered from the Northland west coast due to a high paralytic shellfish toxin risk.

The Northland alert comes as New Zealand Food Safety reduces the biotoxin warning for the Hawke's Bay region after testing has shown a drop in paralytic shellfish toxins to safe levels in some areas.

"Routine tests on seawater from Hokianga Harbour have shown very high levels of toxin-producing phytoplankton," says Vincent Arbuckle, New Zealand Food Safety deputy director-general. "This is very likely to cause shellfish to contain paralytic shellfish toxins over the safe limit."

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However, local councils still have a shellfish-collection warning in place from Te Awanga to Bay View due to harmful viruses and bacteria.

The warning remains in place for the area from Cape Runaway down to the Wairoa River mouth. People are warned not to collect or consume shellfish from this area, as the paralytic shellfish toxins are still at elevated levels.