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Press Release

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DEC Urges Caution on Korean Shellfish

(JUNEAU, AK) – The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is cautioning consumers not to eat any fresh or frozen shellfish from Korea. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reports that all fresh and frozen shellfish, and many products made from these shellfish that were shipped from Korea to the United States, may be contaminated. This includes frozen breaded shellfish products from Korea. Canned shellfish are not affected. Shellfish commercially grown and produced in Alaska are safe to eat and are not affected.

In March, FDA conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the Korean Shellfish Sanitation Program. FDA found ineffective management of land-based pollution sources that can impact shellfish growing areas, such as inadequate controls to prevent the discharge of human fecal waste from impacting fish farms and commercial fishing. FDA found aquaculture vessels operating in and adjacent to shellfish growing areas and detected norovirus in shellfish growing areas.

Norovirus infection causes nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and some stomach cramping; most people recover within two to three days without medical treatment. People with norovirus infection should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration and use good hand washing and other hygienic practices to prevent the spread of illness to others.

As of May 1, the shipment of fresh/frozen molluscan shellfish from Korea to the United States has stopped. Molluscan shellfish includes oysters, clams, mussels, and scallops.

Although DEC has no knowledge of Korean shellfish having been shipped to Alaska, there is a possibility the product could have gone to small retail markets. There have been no reported illnesses in Alaska or nationwide, however norovirus illness from consumption of Korean oysters was reported in the U.S. last year. Consumers who have purchased potentially affected products should not eat them. Consumers may contact the FDA Consumer Complaint Coordinator for Alaska at 800-353-3965.

For more information on DEC's Food Safety and Sanitation Program, visit:
<http://dec.alaska.gov/eh/fss/index.htm>.

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