



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Environmental Conservation

DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
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October 24, 2024

RE: Changes in testing for Paralytic Shellfish Toxins

To our valued clients:

The laboratory mouse supplier that the Environmental Health Lab (EHL) uses is going out of business in two weeks. This will affect paralytic shellfish toxin (PST) testing as alternative vendors and/or methods are evaluated.

Starting Monday, October 21, the EHL reduced the number of mice from 3 to 2 used on samples where there is no-death of the first two mice injected. This change meets regulations. However, since it deviates from the EHL Standard Operating Procedure, there will be a flag on the data and a note in the case narrative of final reports.

Starting Monday, October 28, all PST samples, except geoduck, will be analyzed using HPLC-PCOX. This meets regulatory requirements for commercial shellfish: oysters, blue mussels, and pink scallops. The differences that will be seen are:

- The PCOX reports 11-12 individual congeners (depending on availability of testing standards) and will also display a total PST value.
 - The congeners are broken into two groups (STX/GTX and C toxins), and they are run separately.
- The preliminary results are still expected same day for commercial samples if received by noon.
- The preliminary results will be sent by email in the form of a draft report due to instrument calculations.
- The draft report will include the STX/GTX, and it *may* include the C toxins based on availability.
 - Due to the small historical contribution (<5%) of the C toxins, the STX/GTX preliminary will be released if that value is $\leq 74\mu\text{g}/100\text{g}$. If the STX/GTX are $> 74\mu\text{g}/100\text{g}$, the preliminary results will be held pending the C toxin results. This cutoff may be amended based on additional data. This is to reduce the risk of a 'passing preliminary' and then 'failing' when the C toxins are added.

Due to the regulatory framework of Alaska's geoduck management, the geoduck samples will continue to be accomplished by mouse bioassay (MBA). At this time, we are estimating the remaining mouse inventory will provide one month to make alternative plans.

In the meantime, the EHL will look at vendor alternatives and/or seek emergency method approvals from the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC). This closure is affecting Washington and Oregon as well, so rerouting to those states is not an option. The EHL is working with our partner labs to leverage joint needs going forward.

We appreciate your patience and understanding during this unprecedented time. As always, assistance is available with timing of sample collections, completion of submission forms, packaging, temperature requirements, shipping, and sample tracking. Sampling questions, planned sampling activities, and shipping notifications, can be made to DEC.EH-Lab-ShippingReceiving@alaska.gov or 907-375-8231.

Regards,

Patryce D. McKinney, MBA
Chief, Environmental Health Laboratory