

New Zealand removes shellfish biotoxin alert

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New Zealand Food Safety has lifted the public health warning advising against collecting shellfish on the east coast of the North Island, from Cape Runaway to Wairoa River mouth. However, the public health warning remains in place for lobster caught between Hicks Bay and Mahanga Beach near Mahia.

"Our testing of shellfish has established that concerning levels of paralytic shellfish toxin on the east coast of the North Island have dropped to safe limits again," says Vincent Arbuckle, New Zealand Food Safety deputy director-general.

"However, lobster samples from near Gisborne and Tokomaru Bay taken by the Rock Lobster Industry Council are still coming back over the limit. Paralytic shellfish toxins can accumulate in the gut and intestine of lobster, but not the tail and leg meat. So, if you are wanting to eat lobster caught between Hicks Bay and Mahanga Beach, our advice is to not eat the gut contents. Remove the gut (mustard and intestinal cord in the tail) before cooking because the toxins can spread into the flesh during the cooking process.

"Rock lobster available for sale at supermarkets or retail outlets is not affected.

"It's great news that people on the East Coast will again be able to gather and enjoy most kaimoana safely."

The warning was first issued on 12 October 2023 after routine New Zealand Food Safety testing and was extended along the coastline after follow-up tests showed biotoxin levels up to 12 times the safe limit in some areas.