

In January 2016, a DCTF Executive Committee posed a number of questions to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). This document contains those questions and responses from Patrick Kennelly, CDPH, and will be discussed during the [January 28, 2015 DCTF Executive Committee conference call](#).

January 2016 Questions Regarding the Current Domoic Acid Situation

Q: What would prompt CDPH to require testing in blocks adjacent to blocks that have already passed two clean tests? If required, can those adjacent blocks be identified after the first clean test of the original block? Could those adjacent blocks be tested concurrently with the second test of the original block? How many tests would the adjacent block be required to pass?

A: In an effort to ensure that the levels of domoic acid in crabs from a broader geographic area around each port are consistently testing below the action level, CDPH might initiate testing of additional blocks in an area, when the levels of domoic acid found in crabs from the primary testing blocks are starting to near the action level. CDPH has been working with fishermen and DFW to identify areas where crabs might be caught in an effort to ensure that the results we have, provide sufficient coverage for CDPH and OEHHHA to determine the relative level of domoic acid in crabs from an area. CDPH has already looked at many of the areas currently being sampled in an effort to identify any other areas that we might want to collect samples from, so that it can be completed in advance of the second set of samples being collected. For these additional areas, if the sample set comes back with all crabs below the action level, CDPH will not be seeking two clean sets; however if samples from that new area are above the action level, additional samples will need to be collected and the two clean set requirement will be instituted.

Q: Will CDPH continue to test after the Dungeness crab season opens? If so, will CDPH adhere to the criteria established by Washington and Oregon for in season closures, i.e., that more than 3 crabs of a 6 crab sample must fail to prompt an in season closure?

A: CDPH will continue collecting routine samples from across the state under its Marine Biotxin Monitoring Program. This will include samples of mussels, clams, oysters, anchovies and crabs. We will not be collecting full sets of crabs (6 crabs) on a regular basis unless we start seeing a resurgence of the Pseudo-nitzschia bloom and levels of domoic acid starting to rise in the samples we are collecting. CDPH does not have the authority to close the fishery, rather CDPH would first initiate an advisory for specific areas that were being adversely impacted by the bloom, and if it becomes widespread or elevated levels of toxin start to be seen in the body meat, CDPH would consult with OEHHHA and CDFW on the need to recommend a closure of the fishery to CDFW. CDPH plans to utilize the same criteria as WA and OR, to consider recommending closure unless the level of domoic acid becomes very high, and/or we determine that elevated levels of the toxin are being found in the body meat. If the levels of domoic acid are exceeding the action level in the body meat, the product cannot be safely consumed, even if eviscerated.

Q: Will DPH require a health advisory after the season opening even though all tests are clean? What further steps can the industry take to avoid a health advisory? If an advisory is required, will the industry have input as to the wording of the advisory?

A: CDPH issues health advisories when it finds elevated levels of domoic acid in the seafood products being caught in a particular area. Once the levels decline below the action level and the products are safe to consume, there is no longer a need for the advisory and they are lifted. Advisories are developed to provide critical public health messaging to consumers to ensure that they have the necessary information to make informed choices and protect themselves. These advisories are prepared by technical experts and communication specialists. CDPH does not take input on the wording of public health advisories from industry.