

Dear Councillors,

The Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) has today published this press release <<http://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/paralytic-shellfish-poisoning-incidents/>> following the deaths of two dogs – at North Norfolk (Cley) and Suffolk (Felixstowe Ferry) – who ate dead marine animals contaminated with high levels of Paralytic Shellfish Poison (PSP) toxins. The IFCA, which is leading on this matter, is considering it a regional issue at the moment and will be undertaking sampling to determine the actual cause and extent of the issue. Sampling so far has been limited to N. Norfolk and Felixstowe, so the IFCA is developing a sampling programme that will cover the coast across the eastern IFCA region.

Pasted below, FYI, is a “basic facts” briefing note for councillors and customer services departments. It is important that councillors are aware of the facts, especially as they have a role in helping to provide reassurance in the event that someone calls them and asks about the matter. The advice from the IFCA is that there is no risk to people or animals from the seawater. The only risk is from ingesting PSP-contaminated animals found on the beach. Please note the advice to dog owners about taking sensible precautions.

What happened?

Two dogs – one in Norfolk and one in Suffolk – are now thought to have died in recent weeks after eating dead marine animals (fish, shore crab and starfish) with high levels of PSP toxins.

PSP – or Paralytic Shellfish Poison - is a naturally-occurring marine biotoxin.

It is thought the contaminated marine animals were washed up during winter storms and are likely to have now been washed back into the sea.

What's the risk?

The beaches and resorts along the coast remain fully open for business.

Dog owners are advised to take simple precautions such as keeping pets under close control or on a lead and should prevent them from eating washed-up marine life.

There is no risk to people or pets in the water – swimming remains safe (assuming normal water-safety precautions are taken, of course).

What about seafood?

There is nothing to suggest that anything sold for human consumption has been affected. Tests last week on edible species including crabs, dab and whelks found either no toxins, or toxins at levels well beneath the regulatory limit.

What is being done?

The Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority is working with colleagues in other organisation including Cefas to undertake further sampling to monitor the situation. This will ensure that any ongoing PSP contamination is identified and can be acted on as required.

IFCA is also asking that any incidents of dogs or pets becoming unwell are reported to the local District or Borough Council in which the incident occurred. This will help co-ordinate further work.

Kind regards,

David.

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