
INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Ministry of Agriculture

B.C. shellfish growers prepare to serve fresh raw oysters in 2016

VICTORIA – Fresh raw B.C. oysters will be on restaurant menus in 2016 as the B.C. Shellfish Growers Association and the B.C. Centre for Disease Control are co-hosting a workshop for oyster growers to develop management practices and strategies to reduce the likelihood of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* infections in oysters.

The two-day workshop in Courtney in early December will feature representatives from shellfish growers, the seafood and restaurant industries, and different government agencies, working together so B.C. raw oysters can be enjoyed in restaurants in 2016.

Growers will be working with the BC Centre of Disease Control and Vancouver Coastal Health to develop a plan in response to last year's experience, when warmer than average sea temperatures resulted in higher than normal levels of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* in B.C. oysters. There was a corresponding increase in illness associated with consumption of raw oysters that led to restrictions of their sales at Vancouver Coastal Health-area restaurants to be served cooked. Discussions at the workshop will include testing, monitoring procedures, temperature tracking, traceability, data collection and sharing.

Vibrio parahaemolyticus is a naturally occurring bacterium in sea water. Its numbers increase when water temperature rises during the summer months. The bacteria may grow in molluscs and shellfish such as clams, oysters and mussels when seawater temperatures are warmer. When those shellfish are eaten raw or undercooked, a foodborne illness may occur.

The Ministry of Agriculture provided \$4,000 to support the workshop through the Investment of Agriculture Foundation of B.C.'s (IAF) Aquaculture Innovation Fund. More information about the fund and other government funded programs delivered by IAF is at: <http://iafbc.ca/>

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