



May 23, 2017

Dear Friend of Hawaii Agriculture,

As you know, recent cases of rat lungworm disease (RLWD) has garnered substantial public interest, and unfortunately, inaccurate and fearful misconceptions about the safety of locally grown and prepared foods.

In response to numerous questions and requests for help, our organizations have been actively working with state agencies and the business community to support Hawaii's local food industry. Our islands' food supply chain includes farmers, wholesalers, hoteliers, retailers, restaurants and numerous other food service & beverage operations. As a member of that chain, you can play a valuable role in helping to educate and inform your customers, employees and vendors about RLWD and food safety.

- To date, no commercial farmer, wholesaler, restaurant or grocery store has been found to be a source of RLWD.
- Unlike individual consumers, commercial restaurants are required to follow strict food safety protocols. The Hawaii Department of Health (HDOH) does not presently see any reason to change these existing food safety requirements because of RLWD. Food service businesses should continue to properly follow the rules to help prevent an occurrence of RLWD.
- According to HDOH and the Hawaii Department of Agriculture: "The DOH's HAR, Chapter 50, states that 'Fruits and vegetables may be washed by using approved chemicals' in permitted food establishments. This practice is not required nor is it recommended by the DOH in licensed food establishments or for home use. The intent of the section in the rule is to ensure that, if the food facility wants to use a produce wash, then they must make sure it is approved for food contact by the DOH. There are no studies to date that shows that the use of chemical washes on produce, reduces the risk of contracting RLWD."
- Commercial farmers work hard to manage pests – such as rodents, snails and slugs – in their daily operation. Their success depends on producing healthy, nutritious products for their customers.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet, and should continue to be encouraged.

We understand that your customers and employees may have questions about RLWD. The enclosed flyer contains summary information which we hope will be useful as you have those conversations. We'd like to highlight one quote in particular, from a recent radio show:

"...the local food industry has done a terrific job of obviously preventing anyone from getting rat lungworm from one of our regulated establishments. So to date we still have not linked any of these cases back to our regulated food supply and that's really, really important for people to know."

- Peter Oshiro, Sanitation Branch Program Manager, Hawaii Department of Health

We greatly appreciate your continued support of Hawaii agriculture. Locally grown produce offers a wonderful opportunity to support your business, contribute to the local economy, and enhance the dining experiences of locals and visitors alike. Please feel free to pass along this information and encourage everyone to support local ag. Mahalo!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Denise Yamaguchi".

Denise Hayashi Yamaguchi
Executive Director
Hawaii Agricultural Foundation

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Cabral".

Randy Cabral
President
Hawaii Farm Bureau

Did You Know?

Food Safety & Rat Lungworm Disease



RLWD is a serious health issue, but by working together and being informed, we can help reduce the risk of RLWD – because food safety is everyone's business.

"...the local food industry has done a terrific job of obviously preventing anyone from getting rat lungworm from one of our regulated establishments. To date we still have not linked any of these cases back to our regulated food supply and that's really, really important for people to know."

- Peter Oshiro, Food Sanitation Branch
Hawaii Department of Health

Restaurants across the islands are regulated and inspected by the Hawaii State Department of Health. By law, **food establishments must follow strict food safety protocols.**

Some of the laws governing food safety include:

- Good sanitation practices by employees
- Storing and preparing foods at proper temperatures
- Ensuring sanitary conditions for cleaning, preparing and storing food and equipment
- Buying foods only from approved sources

How do you know if a restaurant is in compliance with state food safety laws? Look for a colored placard which must be posted at each restaurant – a green placard is the best rating.

RLWD is a concern for home gardeners, farmers, chefs, store managers – anyone who produces, supplies and prepares food, whether you grew it yourself in your garden, or bought it from a farm or market.

ALL OF US have a vested interest in following good food safety practices when we grow, prepare and enjoy our meals.

THE POWER OF KNOW!

Great info for consumers from the Hawaii Department of Health

<http://bit.ly/2pmfZhk>



"Managing pests like rodents and slugs are a crucial part of the farmers' operations – so they can avoid crop damage and grow healthy, nutritious products for their customers."

*"As a former farmer myself, I know first-hand **how hard farmers work to care for their crops and protect them from pest damage.**"*

- Warren Watanabe
Executive Director
Maui County Farm Bureau

"Fresh fruits and vegetables are part of a healthy diet and the Department of Health will continue to encourage people to eat fresh produce that is appropriately inspected, stored and washed."

- Janice Okubo
Hawaii Department of Health

"The importance of eating fresh, and preferably locally grown greens is supported by health professionals and the greater Hawaii community."

- The Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy, University of Hawaii at Hilo

