



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**

**Department of Health**

**DIVISION OF SHELLFISH SANITATION**

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August 4, 2010

Certified Virginia Shellfish Dealers:

**RE: Restricted use shellstock**

The Department of Health, Division of Shellfish Sanitation (DSS) was recently notified of two deaths in the District of Columbia attributed to *Vibrio vulnificus* illness from the consumption of raw molluscan shellfish. These cases involved a certified Virginia Shucker Packer selling shellstock that was labeled “*for shucking only by a certified dealer*” and “*for cooking only*” directly to the retail markets where the shellfish implicated in these cases were purchased.

The National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP) has included measures to reduce the number of illnesses associated with *Vibrio vulnificus* (*Vv*) and *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* (*Vp*) through state’s adoption of *Vv* Risk Management and a *Vp* Control Plans. The controls of these *Vibrio* plans include specific time to temperature requirements. Several Gulf States have allowed shellstock not intended for raw consumption to be harvested without meeting the stringent time to temperature requirements. The shellstock in these cases is labeled to indicate that it is intended for cooking, for shucking or further Post Harvest Processing (PHP) by a certified shellfish dealer.

In 2007 the ISSC adopted a *Vp* Control Plan which allowed restricted use labeling of shellstock as a control to include “*for cooking only*”. The Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC) voted in 2009 to eliminate the “*for cooking only*” language as a labeling option. The implementation date of that decision was scheduled to be at the time of the publishing of the 2009 NSSP *Guide for the Control of Molluscan Shellfish* which is expected to be later this year. The recent *Vv* deaths prompted the ISSC Executive Board to take more immediate action, and recently voted to establish July 11, 2010, as the implementation date for removal of “*for cooking only*” ‘as an option for restricted use labeling for shellstock.



The purpose of this correspondence is to advise industry that “*for cooking only*” is no longer acceptable labeling on restricted use shellstock. In addition, dealers handling restricted use shellstock must establish controls to ensure that shellstock with restricted use tags are only sold to a certified shellfish dealer and are not sold to retailers unless the shellstock has been shucked or post harvest processed before sale.

DSS will be advising the Virginia Department of Health, Office of Environmental Health and the Virginia Department of Agriculture to take appropriate action on shellstock found labeled for restricted use at any retail food service or restaurant establishments. Please call Julie Ray at 804-382-3223 or Keith Skiles at 804-864-7479 if you have any questions.

Regards,



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