



SPECIAL EDITION

SENATOR J.KALANI ENGLISH

HAWAI'I STATE SENATE 7TH DISTRICT

HĀNA, EAST AND UPCOUNTRY MAUI, MOLOKA'I, LĀNA'I AND KAHO'OLAWÉ

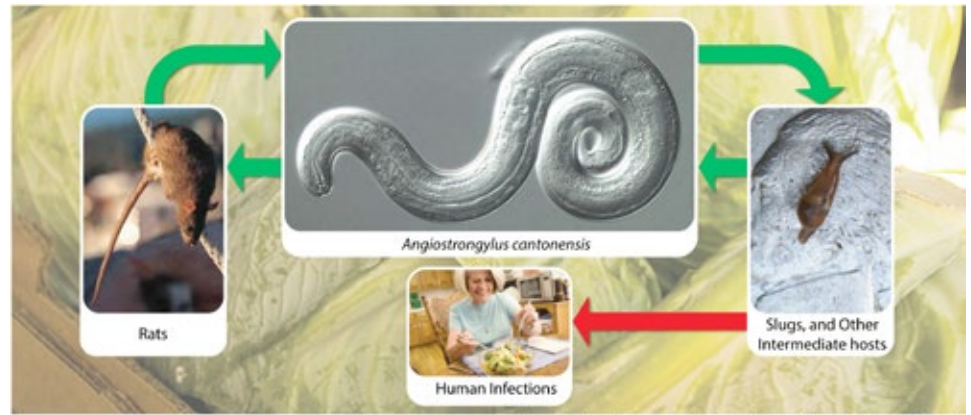


Photo credit: Hawaii Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

RAT LUNGWORM DISEASE COMMUNITY ACTION ALERT

RESOURCES

- CDC's website: https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/angiostrongylus/gen\_info/faqs.html
Hawaii's State Dept. Of Health website: http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/disease\_listing/rat-lungworm-angiostrongyliasis/

MESSAGE FROM KALANI

This is a very important alert and call to action in our community. Please read carefully and follow tips on page 2.

Also, please share this information with your friends, family, neighbors and teach your fresh veggie loving kids to adopt these healthy habits. This is a preventable disease, caution and knowledge is powerful protection.

Mahalo!

J. Kalani English (signature)

Rat lungworm disease has been found in our district. Therefore, we must take immediate action to control and eliminate the spread of the disease.

In March, the State Health Department confirmed a case of rat lungworm disease on Maui and is investigating four more cases. Rat lungworm is caused by a round worm parasite. The adult parasite is only found in rats. The infected rats can pass the larvae in their droppings. Snails and slugs become infected by eating the larvae. People can get the disease by eating raw produce with tiny snails or slugs that have eaten the lungworms. We might also get the disease from eating under cooked freshwater prawns/frogs that have become infected from water contacting infected slugs and snails.

The State Department of Health, State laboratories division can diagnose rat lungworm disease through a test of cerebral spinal fluid (lumbar puncture), though initially blood abnormalities increase our suspicion. Most importantly suspicion is based on a patients' exposure history, such as travel to infected areas, eating raw or under cooked snails or slugs, and their consumption and preparation of raw fruits/vegetables. There is no specific treatment for the disease. However, the parasites cannot age or reproduce in humans and will eventually die. Supportive and pain medication can be given to relieve the symptoms.

Until March, most of the cases occurred on Hawaii's Island. Tricia Mynar was diagnosed with the disease after feeling her first symptoms on Feb. 24. She is a preschool teacher for Kamehameha Schools on Maui and had been temporarily assigned to work on Hawaii's Island, where the disease is prevalent. At first, Mynar had flu like symptoms, soon she was experiencing severe back pain. Her doctor gave her a blood test and the results showed that she had rat lungworm disease. The results in other patients exposed on Maui (Hāna) confirm rat lungworm disease is here.

Therefore, our communities need to take immediate action through prevention and control of the disease. First, the community must control the rodent population by using appropriate traps. Secondly, DO NOT eat raw or under cooked snails or slugs, which maybe in vegetables or on fruits. Thoroughly wash and inspect fresh produce and vegetables, especially if eaten raw. Finally, eliminate snails and slugs near houses and in the garden. If you have suspicious symptoms see your physician.

**J. KALANI ENGLISH**  
Senate Majority Leader

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## HOW TO REACH US

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## CAUTION AND PREVENTION OF RAT LUNGWORM DISEASE

### SYMPTOMS

Rat lungworm can cause a disease affecting the brain and spinal cord. Symptoms may include severe headache, stiffness of the neck and back, skin tingling, pain and sensitivity to light, hallucinations, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes coma and death. The symptoms vary from person to person.

### TREATMENT

There is no specific treatment for the disease. However, the parasites cannot age or reproduce in humans and will eventually die. Treatment and pain medication can be given to relieve the symptoms.

### DETECTION

The State laboratories division can detect rat lungworm disease through a DNA or blood test. More commonly, diagnosis is based on a patient's exposure history such as travel to infected areas or ingesting raw or undercooked snails or slugs.

### TAKE ACTION NOW

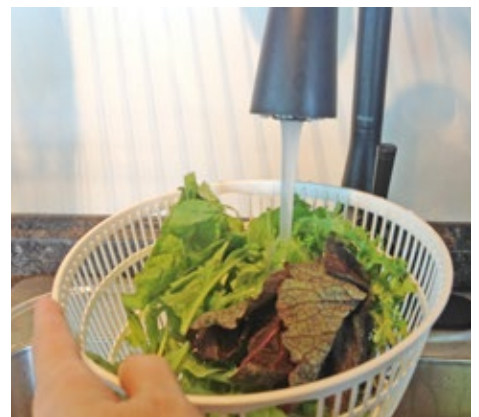
Prevention and control of the disease is important to avoid the disease from spreading.

- **Control the rodent population by using appropriate traps.**
- **Avoid eating raw or undercooked snails or slugs, which may be in vegetables or on fruits.**
- **Use gloves to thoroughly wash and inspect fresh produce and vegetables, especially if eaten raw.**
- **Eliminate snails and slugs near houses and in the garden. Do not handle slugs/snails! Use tongs or chopsticks to dispose.**
- **Dispose of snails and slugs by burying deep in the ground to avoid rodent, animal or human contact.**



*Wash vegetables and fruits thoroughly. The small slugs can remain undetected in the tight folds of leaf growth at base of plant stalks.*

*Cooking and steaming is the safest practice.*



*Please teach your children these healthy practices and share this information with your friends and neighbors.*