

Amanita phalloides Outbreak in California

We have a health crisis in California. Where coast live oak trees are found, 'Death Caps' are appearing by the hundreds, and people are eating them. There are currently 8-9 people in hospitals in the Bay Area. Two received liver transplants; a third person lost a liver and is on a transplant list and the others are being treated with a protocol which includes intravenous extract of milk thistle, Legalon-Sil, first used in the US in 2007 to treat patients who ate *Amanita phalloides* in Wilder Ranch State Park, north of Santa Cruz. *Amanita phalloides* are continuing to spread their range and are, due to steady rain, appearing in places we've never seen them before. We don't know why the 8-9 people ate them, but speculate that perhaps folks who had never seen them before made a very wrong assumption regarding their edibility.

If you, or anyone you know, eats wild mushrooms, please let them know that Death Caps, *Amanita phalloides*, can be found in parks from Monterey to Mendocino right now. To learn more about this deadly mushroom, follow this link: http://bayareamushrooms.org/mushroommonth/amanita_phalloides.html.

Anyone who has eaten a wild mushroom and is experiencing abdominal pain, cramping, vomiting, and diarrhea should seek medical attention immediately and call California Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222. Dogs are also at great risk.

The North American Mycological Association has a list of emergency identifiers in California who can assist with identification, and a full section of resources about mushroom poisonings. Check http://www.namyco.org/mushroom_poisoning_identifiers.php#CA.

NAMA affiliated clubs and individual members can use our resources to help. The NAMA website has an informative "poisonings" section with:

detailed information about symptoms for various kinds of ingested toxins, the most visited page on the site: http://www.namyco.org/mushroom_poisoning_syndromes.php, a warning poster, http://www.namyco.org/docs/NAMA_Warning_Poster.png (large pdf file). Several parks have put up the warning poster in the past week, including San Mateo Parks Department, East Bay Regional Park District, Point Reyes National Seashore, and (hopefully) California State Parks. Kudos to these organizations for being proactive. If you know of a park with lots of Death Caps, encourage them to post a warning sign, even if mushroom collecting is not allowed.

If you know anyone who has had an unfortunate experience eating wild mushrooms this season, including pets, I encourage you to file an online poison report (<https://mms.namyco.org/members/form.php?orgcode=NAMA&fid=1569949>). NAMA collects these reports, and reports from its web of emergency mushroom identifiers, into an extensive database of mushroom poisonings through the decades.

There's even a page about poisonings in dogs and cats http://www.namyco.org/mushroom_poisonings_in_dogs_an.php (dogs eat lots of mushrooms; cats not so much, although it does happen) and due to the different physiology of pets, some fungi are especially toxic. Please file an online poison report for pets if you know of an incident.

Be safe. If in doubt, throw it out!

David Rust

