



ASEAN BIODIASPORA VIRTUAL CENTER

DISEASE ALERT

With Support by:



Korea Disease Control and
Prevention Agency



In partnership with
Canada



Kemenkes



ASSOCIATION
OF SOUTHEAST
ASIAN NATIONS

March 21, 2025 | Issue No. 21

First alert: March 21, 2025 | Unknown Illness in Australia

Sub-Locations Affected

State of South Australia

Event Description

On March 18, 2025, over 100 surfers developed coughing, eye irritation, sore throat, and blurred vision after visiting Waitpinga and Parsons beaches in South Australia. The beaches, now closed, had mysterious foam suspected to be linked to fish kills and a local flu outbreak. Investigations are ongoing.



Map of sub location and beaches affected

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/mar/18/mysterious-sea-foam-on-south-australian-beaches-reportedly-leaves-more-than-100->

Epidemiological Information

- On March 17, 2025, Australian health and environmental authorities launched an investigation into the presence of unexplained yellow foam along the coastline of Waitpinga and Parsons beaches in South Australia, about 100 km south of Adelaide. The beaches were closed due to a toxic algae bloom that caused dozens of sea dragons, fish, and octopuses to die and wash ashore.
- On March 18, 2025, over 100 surfers reported coughing, eye irritation, sore throat, and blurred vision after visiting Waitpinga and Parsons beaches over the past weekend. Possible causes include cyanobacterial blooms (blue-green algae), environmental factors like low oxygen levels, salinity changes, or pollution, and exposure to toxic contaminants.

Response Measures

- The South Australian Department of Health, the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are investigating unexplained yellow foam along Waitpinga and Parsons beaches, linked to "influenza-like symptoms" among surfers and significant marine life deaths.
- Health authorities have closed the affected areas, Waitpinga and Parsons Beach, since March 18, 2025.
- Authorities and experts are analyzing water, air, and patient samples to identify contaminants or toxins causing the illnesses and marine life deaths. This is not the first incident of its kind in Australia. In January, Sydney authorities closed nine beaches due to small debris balls, a phenomenon also observed last October, identified as primarily fatty acids and petroleum hydrocarbons.
- Authorities have advised residents and visitors to avoid the affected areas until further notice.

Sources:

1. BlueDot (Event Alert), issued on March 18, 2025.
2. Life Technology (March 19, 2025) *Beaches Closed: 100+ Surfers Ill, Sea Creatures Washed Up*, Life Technology. Retrieved March 20, 2025 from https://www.lifetechnology.com/blogs/life-technology-science-news/beaches-closed-100-surfers-ill-sea-creatures-washed-up?srsId=AfmBOopjSqSqt7PxQUfKEvaAE__mziaCLjvxDK49qsbxEvpUyKtpWyhN
3. The Guardian (March 18, 2025) *Mysterious Sea foam on South Australian beaches reportedly leaves more than 100 surfers ill*, The Guardian. Retrieved March 19, 2025 from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/mar/18/mysterious-sea-foam-on-south-australian-beaches-reportedly-leaves-more-than-100-surfers-ill>
4. The Independent (March 18, 2025) *South Australia: Mysterious sea foam at Waitpinga and Parsons Beach*, The Independent. Retrieved March 19, 2025 from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/australasia/south-australia-waitpinga-parsons-beach-sea-foam-b2716951.html>