



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**HAWAII STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
TO HOLD RAT LUNGWORM PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING  
AT ILWU HALL IN LANAI CITY**

HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH), Maui District Health Office, will hold a public informational meeting on rat lungworm disease on Thursday, July 6, 2017 at the ILWU Hall in Lanai City, Lanai from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The meeting will include an opportunity for the public to ask questions.

A number of public health experts and community partners will be present to share their findings and recommendations on preventing the spread of rat lungworm, including the DOH, College of Tropical Agriculture & Human Resources (CTAHR), the Maui Invasive Species Committee (MISC) and Maui School Garden Network.

Rat lungworm is a rare disease caused by the parasite *Angiostrongylus cantonensis* which is found in rats, slugs and snails. The disease affects the brain and spinal cord and occurs when a person ingests raw or undercooked snails or slugs or unwashed raw produce such as leafy greens. To date, DOH has confirmed 15 cases of the illness in Hawaii for 2017, including nine (9) from Hawaii Island, four (4) Maui residents and two (2) Maui visitors.

DOH has launched a number of initiatives to address rat lungworm. Together with partner agencies, DOH has held community meetings on Maui and Molokai to educate the public on rat lungworm and to share best practices on the prevention of this disease, including the proper care and washing of produce, as well as rodent and slug control. DOH food safety inspectors have also worked with permitted food establishments on hygiene and food preparation, and medical advisories were sent to physicians and hospitals to increase awareness of the disease.

DOH is planning future public information efforts to educate residents and visitors about rat lungworm prevention.

For additional information on the disease, go online to <https://mauiready.org/ratlungworm/> or [http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/disease\\_listing/rat-lungworm-angiostrongyliasis/](http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/disease_listing/rat-lungworm-angiostrongyliasis/). Call the DOH office on Lanai at (808) 565-7114 or on Maui at (808) 984-8201 for more details on the meeting.

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