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Wastewater data consistent with important COVID-19 metrics

HONOLULU – The Department of Health (DOH) published a [COVID-19 Wastewater Report](#) on Thursday, September 29. The report shows COVID-19 cases have declined since early June and the Omicron subvariant BA.5 is the dominant strain of COVID-19 in Hawai'i.

“Data from wastewater testing aligns with other data sets,” said State Laboratories Division (SLD) Administrator Edward Desmond, Ph.D, D (ABMM).

“Results from COVID-19 tests taken by individuals show case counts have dropped since June. This is consistent with data in the Wastewater Report which shows concentrations of SARS-CoV-2 have declined since June. Genome sequencing shows BA.5 is the most common subvariant in Hawai'i. The Wastewater Report also supports that finding,” Desmond said.

Wastewater surveillance is another tool used to monitor COVID-19 levels in our community. It can alert us to a shift in trends or the presence of new variants.

The Wastewater Report provides a summary of surveillance done as part of the National Wastewater Surveillance System (NWSS). DOH coordinates collection of samples from 15 wastewater treatment plants across the state. The samples are analyzed by Biobot Analytics as part of the NWSS at no cost to Hawai'i. Biobot Analytics now provides test results about a week after samples are collected.

“The State Laboratories Division continues to develop its own COVID-19 wastewater surveillance capabilities. Our staff is performing longitudinal validation of our own protocols by comparing results of our wastewater analysis with results of Biobot's analysis. The fast, cost-free analysis provided by Biobot gives us desired information and affords our staff time to work toward wastewater testing for other pathogens,” Desmond said.

SLD will publish a Wastewater Report every two weeks. It will be posted on the [DOH COVID-19 Data Reports](#) page where the Variant Report is currently posted.

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