



Escolar and rudderfish not suitable for catering

This fact sheet provides the food industry with information on the cause of illness associated with the consumption of escolar and rudderfish.

What illness is caused by escolar and rudderfish?

The major side effect of eating rudderfish and escolar is kerriorrhoea, the rapid expulsion of indigestible wax esters and a compound known as DAGE contained in the above mentioned species. Kerriorrhoea is characterised by bright orange to oily brown diarrhoea. Rudderfish would appear to affect less people than escolar.

The wax ester and DAGE compounds are similar to Omega 3's, renowned for their health benefits. The difference is that they are indigestible. The fish use the wax esters to assist in buoyancy.

Not all people are affected by these wax esters and not all of these fish have a negative effect. Some fishermen and consumers report eating the fish for a number of years with no ill effects.

In the last 18 months, a large number of cases of kerriorrhoea have been identified. These cases have included incidents involving large scale catering, staff meals at restaurants and individuals dining out.

Kerriorrhoea, as opposed to diarrhoea, does not cause loss of body fluid and is therefore not life threatening. However, it causes significant discomfort ranging from stomach cramps to rapid loose bowel movements, with onset 30 minutes to 36 hours after consumption.

Seborrhoea is another long term side effect of eating these fish. In this instance the wax esters are released through the sebaceous gland of the skin, blocking the pores and potentially interfering with metabolism.

What other names are escolar and rudderfish sold as?

Rudderfish *Centrolophus*, *Schedophilus* and *Tubbia* are also marketed as butterfish. *Escolar* *Lepidocybium flavobrunneum* and *Ruvettus pretiosus* (escolar) are also known as oilfish and black oilfish. All of these species are often marketed as rudderfish, because it is a more familiar name.

How do I handle escolar and rudderfish to prevent kerriorrhoea?

At the present time there is no scientific information available on the safe handling of these species, therefore it is not advisable to promote this species for catering purposes.

As kerriorrhoea cannot be prevented by correct food handling and cooking techniques, it is strongly recommended that escolar and rudderfish are not used for catering purposes.

For further information:

Contact the Environmental Health Officer from your local government or Queensland Health Public Health Unit.

Fish tips:

- Escolar and rudderfish are also known as
 - butterfish
 - oilfish
 - black oilfish
- These fish should not be used for catering purposes