Grand Shanghai 大上海

Address: 390 Havelock Road 1F Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel, Singapore 169662
Tel: 6836 6866

To all those couples out there looking for a cosy place to hold your wedding banquet, I suggest Grand Shanghai as one of your options. I attended my colleague's wedding lunch there. The newly wed couple were inclined to do something very much different. They rented a jeep instead of the usual mercedes/bmw. The bride wore gowns that were practically day dresses. She carried a bouquet of lollipops instead of flowers. It was free seating. Nice.

I hope more couples do as they did. Forsake those elaborate dinners at hotels. Do without all that unnecessary pomp and ceremony. Get rid of that silly custom of having to invite huge amount of people (comprising distant relatives and virtual strangers). Let's make wedding ceremonies simple and intimate! I call upon the country to rise up and make your stand! Screw that overly priced hotel package!

ok ok…rant over.

The place had a actual singer belting out oldie Chinese songs. Nice.

The starters was individually served. There was Cold Chicken, Top Shell, Cold Pork & Jelly Fish (i think?). Nice.

The Shark Fin Soup. Normal.

Fried Prawn With Chilli. Spicy & Very Nice.

Steamed Fish. The meat was a bit wooden (not so flesh).

Abalone, Mushroom & Vegetables. Normal.

Fried Pork Knuckles. Unusual & Nice!

Steamed Egg with Shreds of Scallop. Not so nice. It was hard for the scallop taste to overcome the eggy smell.

Noodles. Ok lar.

Dessert was a Fried Puff filled with Tao Sar & Banana. Nice!

Geelong Advertiser

Hot Topic: AAHL guarding against deadly diseases

Michaela Farrington

09Jul07

Leaving your clothes behind is all in a day's work for researchers inside the Australian Animal Health Laboratory's secure area

THE sign on the door reads, `no clothes or personal effects beyond this point'.

Not exactly a standard message for a workplace entrance in Geelong.

But for the 80 people who go to work each day in the secure area of Geelong's CSIRO Australian Animal Health Laboratory, there's nothing standard about a day at work.

When, each morning, they strip naked and push open the heavy metal door to the airlock chamber on their way into the laboratory, they're heading into a workplace where far more worrying things exist than office politics and water-cooler gossip.

These men and women work in a laboratory where some of the newest and deadliest diseases are studied _ viruses such as SARS, avian influenza, and several recently discovered viruses carried by bats.

They are one of the world's first lines of defence against the growing tide of viruses making the jump from animal hosts to humans.

The laboratory, set inconspicuously on a big grassy allotment in East Geelong, is one of the most sophisticated facilities on the planet for safely handling and containing emerging diseases.

This week, the Australian Animal Health Laboratory invited the Geelong Advertiser to step through the airlock chamber and take a look around the facility's secure areas.

Microbiological security officer Dr Gordon Abraham led the tour, explaining the strict protocols lab workers must follow to keep themselves safe and to make sure the dangerous micro-organisms are securely contained inside.

Each morning, the researchers and other staff arrive at work, enter one of the many small locker rooms, undress and remove their wristwatch, jewellery and even hair-ties.

After they press the big black button that releases the door to the airlock chamber, they step inside, press the door firmly shut and then listen as the seal around the door inflates, creating an airtight barrier.

Inside the chamber, another button releases the door to the secure side of the laboratory. Here, they'll find a set of clothing _ a T-shirt and white overalls, white sneakers and a set of safety glasses _ carefully laid out by the laundry staff.

The lab workers can't bring anything in with them. And, at the end of the day when they leave, they can't take anything out, not even their research notes, which must be emailed or faxed out.

When the scientists and lab staff head home for the day, they step back into the airlock, leaving their clothes behind. They shower inside the chamber, scrub under their nails, shampoo their hair and wash their beard if they have one.

A blinking light in the airlock will tell them when they have spent the required three minutes in the shower and are free to return to the non-secure side of the building.

What comes into the secure area, stays in the secure area or is destroyed.

Old posters still hang on the walls of many of the laboratories because if they're taken down, they'll have to be incinerated, like all solid waste in the facility. Sewage is heat-treated. Even the air is filtered on its way into and out of the laboratory.

Because of this, there's not a trace of dust inside the secure area. The air is clean, dry and kept at a lower pressure than the outside world to keep any airborne infectious agents inside the laboratory.

Walking down the long, wide corridor in the secure area, Dr Abraham points out one of the many individual laboratories within the facility.

Looking through the glass window into the room, it looks like a standard laboratory _ a long workbench, bottles of chemicals, a microscope.

But on the door to the lab there is a hand-written list of all the organisms researchers are studying inside. Each laboratory door carries a similar list of exotic sounding diseases _ avian influenza, West Nile virus, Japanese encephalitis, rabies, Newcastle disease, Bluetongue disease. Often, there's also a warning not to enter without certain vaccinations.

This lab, like all the others, is airtight to keep all infectious agents inside.

Dr Abraham calls this the box within a box concept.

ntsThe thick concrete walls of the biocontainment facility form an airtight box, built to withstand wind gusts of up to 300kmh and an earthquake of 5.8 on the Richter scale.

Within this concrete box, each individual laboratory also forms its own airtight box _ a second barrier to prevent the tiny organisms escaping into the outside world.

The barrier isn't the only thing that is duplicated at the laboratory. Other essential services such as electricity generators, steam plants and compressed air plants and even drains are duplicated or even triplicated.

A large team of engineering staff work behind the scenes each day to keep the hi-tech lab running.

When the laboratory was built in 1985, it was designed to study animal disease and protect Australian's disease-free trading status.

Researchers still do this work at the facility, developing new diagnostic tests, vaccines and treatments for animal diseases.

They study diseases affecting livestock, aquatic animals and wildlife.

They test imported animals for diseases and test samples that veterinary services send in when they suspect serious diseases such as avian influenza.

The laboratory receives, on average, one suspected emergency disease sample for testing every day.

Geelong's scientists working on animal diseases have had several high profile successes in recent years, including identifying the disease killing frogs worldwide.

The laboratory's researchers are also part of the fight to save Tasmanian Devils from a deadly cancer devastating devil populations. They are hunting for the cause of the illness that causes tumours to grow across the faces of affected animals. The disease has already wiped out about half the devil population.

Geelong animal health laboratory scientists are leading research into a virus to stop cane toads in their tracks as well another virus which could help eradicate one of the nation's worst aquatic pests _ carp.

But increasingly, the laboratory is working on viruses which cause diseases in both animals and humans. Scientists call these zoonoses.

Growing numbers of zoonoses are emerging around the globe and many scientists believe one of these could be responsible for the next big epidemic or even pandemic.

History shows the power of these viruses to devastate human populations. The Spanish flu _ a variant of avian influenza _ killed 50 million people in one year in 1918.

In the face of this growing threat, CSIRO has stepped up its research into these organisms in recent years.

Just last week a team from the laboratory announced they had discovered the likely cause of a new human virus. The team, led by senior research scientist Linfa Wangntsoknte, found bats were the likely host of the Melaka virus, which can cause an acute respiratory disease in humans.

In one laboratory further down the corridor, a researcher is dressed in what looks like an astronaut's space suit. The researcher's fully-contained suit is tethered to a bright yellow wire, which coils up into the roof. This is his only air supply and when he moves to a different part of the room, he disconnects his air supply and reconnects his suit to another yellow wire closer to where he is working.

Dr Abraham explains that this laboratory is where the most dangerous viruses are studied _ the ones that can affect humans as well as animals and for which there are no cures or vaccines.

In this laboratory, scientists work on viruses such as SARS _secure acute respiratory syndrome _ which killed 800 people during the 2003 outbreak.

After the outbreak, it was Geelong's scientists who, in partnership with researchers from China, discovered bats were the natural host of the SARS virus.

That finding opened up a new area of research into bats and the viruses they harbour which pose a risk to people and livestock.

To study these deadly microorganisms, researchers work at the highest level of biosecurity _ biosecurity level four _ which means they'll wear the space suit and take a chemical shower in the suit when they leave the room.

This kind of work comes with risks and despite the suite of strict safety protocols to protect workers, accidents have happened. A simple case of human error at the laboratory can make national headlines, such as the incident in March when three scientists working on the H5N1 strain of avian influenza discovered the air filter on the breathing apparatus of their safety suit was missing. None were infected and all sat out the incubation period in quarantine. In the wake of the incident, existing safety proceedures were reinforced among staff.

The incident is a reminder of just how important the strict protocols at the lab are, particularly when working on potentially deadly viruses with cure.

The Nipah virus, which has killed more than 125 people and more than thousand pigs in Malaysia, is also studied in this high-security lab. It was here that local scientists detected and characterised this new viral disease.

The other virus studied at biosecurity level four is the Hendra virus, which killed famous horse trainer Vic Rail and 14 of his horses in 1994. A team of Geelong researchers isolated and identified the never-before-seen virus in just two weeks.

CSIRO scientists are working with US colleagues on a promising vaccine for both the Hendra and the closely related Nipah viruses.

It's cutting edge research of global significance, and it's happening right here in Geelong.

Dispatch

http://www.dispatch.co.za/2007/07/07/Easterncape/bpoach.html

Cops in lively ocean chase

Poaching suspects flee after ramming boat

By DAVID MACGREGOR

Port Alfred Bureau

PORT Alfred police are investigating attempted
murder charges against a suspected abalone poaching gang after an undercover police team had to fire a warning shot during a tense two-hour standoff with three rubber ducks near Cannon Rocks on Thursday
afternoon.

Station commander Director Morgan Govender last night told the Saturday Dispatch police scrambled a helicopter when things turned nasty and one of the rubber ducks tried to ram the undercover team.

It returned to base minutes later without helping in the standoff.

“It was a life and death situation … we got a frantic call the team was in trouble and immediately sent the airwing as back-up. The team fired a warning shot and this scared the alleged poachers off.”

The drama began when the undercover team managed to steer their rubber duck within 100 metres of four super-ducks before the onboard lookouts raised the alarm and one duck raced off towards deeper water.

The undercover team gave chase believing it was loaded with poached perlemoen, but had to give up when two other ducks abandoned divers in the water and joined in, swerving dangerously in front of them.

The three super-ducks sped off towards Port Elizabeth as the undercover duck raced back to confront the fourth super-duck and the divers in the water.

During another chase, the fourth duck tried to ride over the undercover team, narrowly missing crew, as it smashed over the back of them. A stainless steel structure on the back of the police duck was damaged as the suspected poachers sped off.

“We are investigating attempted murder against them,” Govender said.

About six divers swam to the beach and waited patiently as two of the ducks returned and played cat-and-mouse, trying to lure the team to give chase – so one of them could pick up the stranded divers.

After a tense standoff, they gave up and the divers walked to Cannon Rocks. They were not arrested as they had no abalone on them. The four super-ducks managed to escape.

“We are taking a tough stance against poachers in the area,” Govender said.

Police are following up leads and expect to make arrests soon.

The dramatic standoff comes one day after a task team arrested five suspected perlemoen poachers after they allegedly stashed R500000 worth of abalone in bushes on a remote beach near Kenton-on-Sea.

http://www.abc.net.au/

Seafood industry calls for more testing of Chinese imports

Friday, 06/07/2007

The Australian seafood industry is calling on the Federal Government to step up its testing of Chinese seafood imports.

The call comes after traces of antibiotics and illegal residues were detected in Chinese seafood sent to the United States, prompting authorities to hold all farm-raised ocean produce.

The Queensland Fishing Industry Association's Neil Green says the imports are a risk to consumer health and the domestic fishing industry.

"It's certainly going to flood the domestic market with this but our concern is certainly the health of Australians and our reputation of a clean green product that we're suppling," he said.

"If the US Food and Drug Administration can take action to protect American consumers the Federal Government can follow suit as far as I'm concerned."

But the Australian Seafood Importers Association's Harry Peters says the calls are not justified since Australia is a long way in front of the US.

"The US are only now catching up to what Australia has been doing in respect of biosecurity for the last three years," he said.

"We believe the screening is effective.

"It relates to a specific risk on an active list."

The Federal Government says United States Food and Drug Administration believes there is no immediate health risk from the imports.

http://redwoodreality.blogspot.com/

Friday, July 06, 2007

How to cook abalone

From the North Coast Journal:

“My mom says its sacrilege to cook it any other way than breaded and fried,” says Hart, but you have to pound it out and tenderize it first, like calamari. “Otherwise, it tastes like shoe leather.” Warner adds that you can’t season it too much, because the unique flavor will be lost. “Abalone chowder, ceviche, sushi -- they’ve done it all: But, in my opinion, fried and dipped in marinara is the best way to go.”

I agree with Mom, except that I wouldn't bother with the marina. Just dipped in egg then seasoned bread crumbs and pan-fried with a little bit of oil and some lemon. Then tossed on a thin slice of Brio's country sour.

Photo courtesy of Peltarion.

posted by Eric V. Kirk @ 12:10 PM

Comments:

A hundred bucks a pound for a snail?!

No way!

posted by Anonymous : Fri Jul 06, 12:39:00 PM

The recipe might start this way:

"First obtain legally-taken Abalone."

posted by Anonymous : Fri Jul 06, 02:27:00 PM

As the previous owners of Cadilac Wok learned the hard way.

Bob Burke once received a court referral for a client who was charged with "possession of creature, illegally obtained." When he contacted his client he asked him to leave "the creature" at home. The creature was of course an abalone.

It's a serious matter actually. Major fines and even jail time depending on the number you take.

posted by Eric V. Kirk : Fri Jul 06, 02:35:00 PM

As it probably should be, or the abalone population would be more decimated than it already is.

Then again, they might not be too bad off as people are still able to find them, even in shallow water.

posted by Fred : Fri Jul 06, 03:12:00 PM

The population has dropped since the otter population has recovered, although there's some question as to whether the population had been artificially boosted by the otter decimation to begin with.

posted by Eric V. Kirk : Fri Jul 06, 04:09:00 PM

Quota limit cuts hurt abalone exporter

Posted Fri Jul 6, 2007 11:13am AEST

A major abalone exporter on the New South Wales far south coast says he is facing bankruptcy because of further cuts in quota limits.

The State Government last month announced that the total allowable commercial catch would be reduced even further this year, which it says will help rebuild shellfish stocks.

But Dick Perese of Southern Ocean says eight quota cuts in eight years is just too much for the industry to absorb.

He says he is facing closure as abalone operators abandon the industry.

"It's going to bankrupt me too because if I can't continue sourcing my product out of it ... when you are dealing in these other countries like Japan and they ask you 'what is the problem?' It's bizarre when you try and tell them that the Government just doesn't take any notice of what is going on," he said.

Prawn IRA Update

BIOSECURITY AUSTRALIA POLICY MEMORANDUM 2006/16

PRAWNS AND PRAWN PRODUCTS IMPORT RISK ANALYSIS (IRA) – REVISED IRA TEAM MEMBERSHIP AND PROGRESS REPORT

This Biosecurity Australia Policy Memorandum (BAPM) informs stakeholders of a change to the prawns and prawn products IRA team and of the outcome of initial research into the susceptibility of Australian prawns to Taura syndrome virus (TSV).

The prawn IRA commenced in 1996 with an issues paper (Animal Quarantine Policy Memoranda 1998/96) released in 1998 and a draft IRA report (Animal Biosecurity Policy Memorandum (ABPM) 2000/41) released in August 2000. Interim measures for uncooked prawns were introduced in 2000 and 2001 to address risks associated with white spot syndrome virus (WSSV) and yellowhead virus (YHV) (ABPM 2000/57, 2001/06 and 2001/11). These include size limitations, health certification from the relevant government authority in the exporting country, post arrival inspection in Australia by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service and testing for WSSV. In May 2002, it was decided to release a revised draft IRA report that is now at an advanced stage of preparation.

The IRA team has continued to meet regularly to prepare the revised draft report. Additional resources within Biosecurity Australia have been allocated to the IRA and I have now appointed Dr Mike Nunn, Principal Scientist, Biosecurity Australia, to take over as chair of the IRA team. He comes with extensive experience in scientific analysis and providing advice in animal health policy. Dr Robyn Martin, General Manager, Animal Biosecurity, Biosecurity Australia will remain as a member of the IRA team. The overall membership of the prawn IRA team is therefore:

Dr Mike Nunn, Principal Scientist, Animal Biosecurity, Biosecurity Australia (Chair)

Dr Leigh Owens (James Cook University) – aquatic animal health expert

Dr Brian Jones (Department of Fisheries, Western Australia) – aquatic animal health expert

Mr Glen Hurry (DAFF) – fisheries and aquaculture management

Dr Robyn Martin, General Manager, Animal Biosecurity, Biosecurity Australia.

Biosecurity Australia and the IRA team have been monitoring developments regarding the emergence of the prawn disease, TSV, including the spread of TSV into parts of Asia, the increased volume of imports, the lower cost of vannamei imports from Asia, and scientific information on the virus. TSV is exotic to Australia and is not a human health concern.

Taura syndrome is an internationally reportable viral disease affecting mainly vannamei prawns (*Litopenaeus vannamei*). Originally reported from Ecuador in cultured *L. vannamei*, the disease has since been associated with production losses in the Americas, and more recently in Asia. Its spread is usually associated with movements of live prawns. It is not known to manifest as a significant disease in the prawn species produced in Australia and there is no commercial vannamei prawn fishing or farming in Australia.

Biosecurity Australia has commissioned the Aquaculture Pathology Laboratory, University of Arizona in the United States, to research the susceptibility of five Australian crustacean species to infection with the Thai and Belize isolates of TSV by ingestion of infected prawn meat or by injection. The species were:

- banana prawn *Fenneropenaeus merguiensis* (challenged only with Thai TSV isolate),
- black tiger prawn *Penaeus monodon,*
- redclaw *Cherax quadricarinatus*,
- marron *Cherax tenuimanus* and
- the giant freshwater prawn *Macrobrachium rosenbergii*.

Significant clinical disease due to TSV was not observed in any of the Australian species challenged. Nor did challenge with TSV result in cumulative mass mortalities that are typical of TSV outbreaks among susceptible species. TSV nucleic acid was detected in all the species, although an active (replicative) infection was only detected in *Fenneropenaeus merguiensis* and *Penaeus monodon*, following injection challenge. The positive control prawns, *L. vannamei*, which were treated in the same way as the Australian animals, developed the disease and died.

Further information on the research is available from Biosecurity Australia's website at www.biosecurityaustralia.gov.au or available in hard copy from Biosecurity Australia on request. Due to the low number of some experimental animals, Biosecurity Australia has commissioned the University of Arizona to repeat the study for banana and black tiger prawns.

Biosecurity Australia and the IRA team will continue to monitor and review the situation in light of the latest available scientific information on TSV and will continue to assess the suitability of the current controls to meet any new or changed risks.

Consultation

For further information on the IRA team members please contact the officer below.

Please pass this notice to other interested parties. If those parties wish to be included in future communications on this matter they should get in touch with the contact officer (details below).

Information on IRAs and policy reviews being conducted by Biosecurity Australia is available on the Internet at **www.biosecurityaustralia.gov.au**.

Confidentiality

Stakeholders are advised that, subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* and the *Privacy Act 1988*, all submissions received in response to policy memoranda will be publicly available and may be listed or referred to in any papers or reports prepared on the subject matter of the memoranda.

The Commonwealth reserves the right to reveal the identity of a respondent unless a request for anonymity accompanies the submission. Where a request for anonymity does not accompany the submission the respondent will be taken to have consented to the disclosure of his or her identity for the purposes of Information Privacy Principle 11 of the *Privacy Act 1988*.

The contents of the submission will not be treated as confidential unless they are marked 'confidential' and they are capable of being classified as such in accordance with the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

Bill Roberts

A/g Chief Executive

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Mother-of-pearl: Classic Beauty And Remarkable Strength

Science Daily — While the shiny material of pearls and abalone shells has long been prized for its iridescence and aesthetic value in jewelry and decorations, scientists admire mother-of-pearl for other physical properties as well.

Pupa Gilbert, a professor of physics, holds an abalone shell on June 18, 2007, in her office in Chamberlin Hall at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Gilbert and her colleagues are studying how the microscale architecture of mother-of-pearl, the iridescent material that lines abalone shells, makes it 3,000 times more fracture-resistant than its mineral building blocks. Gilbert's former publication name is Gelsomina De Stasio. (Credit: Jeff Miller / Courtesy of University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Also called nacre ("NAY-ker"), mother-of-pearl is 3,000 times more fracture-resistant than the mineral it is made of, aragonite, says Pupa Gilbert, a physicist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "You can go over it with a truck and

not break it - you will crumble the outside [of the shell] but not the [nacre] inside. And we don't understand how it forms - that's why it's so fun to study."

Understanding the mechanism by which nacre forms would be the first step toward harnessing its strength and simplicity, she says. "We don't know how to synthesize materials that are better than the sum of their parts."

Writing in the June 29 issue of Physical Review Letters, Gilbert and her colleagues in the UW-Madison department of physics and School of Veterinary Medicine, the Institute for the Physics of Complex Matter in Switzerland and the UW-Madison Synchrotron Radiation Center, now describe unexpected elements of nacre architecture that may underlie its strength and offer clues into how this remarkable material forms.

Like our bones and teeth, nacre is a biomineral, a combination of organic molecules - made by living organisms - and mineral components that organisms ingest or collect from their environment. The aragonite mineral in nacre is made of calcium carbonate, which marine animals form from elements abundant in seawater.

Though a mere 5 percent of abalone nacre is organic, this small fraction somehow lays enough foundation for the mineral components to assemble spontaneously, Gilbert says.

"Ninety-five percent of the mass of this biomineral is self-assembled, while only 5 percent is actively formed by the organism," she says. "It is one of the most efficient mechanisms you can think of."

To gain insight into this self-assembly process, Gilbert and graduate student Rebecca Metzler examined the structure of abalone nacre using synchrotron radiation - light emitted by electrons speeding around a curved track.

When used to examine a cross-section of an abalone shell, previously seen to resemble a brick wall with layers of organic "mortar" separating individual crystalline "bricks," the polarized light from the synchrotron revealed that the nacre wall was not uniform.

Instead, the wall contained distinct clumps of bricks, each an irregular column of crystals with identical composition but a crystal orientation different than neighboring columns.

Since orientation affects how crystals emit electrons, "some of the columns of bricks appear white and others appear black and more appear gray, depending on their crystal orientation," Gilbert explains.

The overall effect resembles a camouflage pattern, each roughly columnar cluster a slightly different shade.

She suggests that this mosaic architecture of nacre, with numerous non-aligned crystals, could lead to a stronger material by preventing the formation of natural cleavage planes - like those that form the facets of a cut diamond - where a single crystal can easily break. "It is intuitive that a poly-crystal is mechanically stronger than a single crystal, so perhaps that is an advantage for the animal," Gilbert says.

With this new information about nacre structure and the help of UW-Madison theoretical physicist Susan Coppersmith, the group turned to modeling to try to understand how such a structure could form.

"By looking at the final result and comparing it to the result of different growth models, you get insight into what the actual mechanism of the growth is," Coppersmith says.

The group developed a model that suggests that the animal creates the organic "mortar" layers first, peppered with randomly distributed crystal nucleation, or seeding, sites.

From their observations, they predict that mineral crystals start growing inside the shell and extend horizontally until they contact another growing crystal and vertically until they hit the overlying mortar. If that crystal contacts another of the scattered crystal formation sites on the next tier up, it should trigger growth of a new crystal with the same crystal orientation, gradually building a rough column of irregular width.

With further experiments, the researchers hope to test and refine their model as well as examine other biominerals, such as human teeth and the nacre of other species such as pearl oysters, mussels, or nautiluses, to improve their understanding of biomineral formation and assembly.

"If you understand how it forms, you could think of reproducing it, producing a synthetic material that's inspired by nature - a so-called 'biomimetic' material," Gilbert explains. "If we learn how to harness the mechanism of formation, then we could, for example, produce cars that absorb all the energy at the impact point but do not fracture.

"But from my point of view, it's most interesting because of the fundamental mechanisms of how it forms - these natural self-assembly mechanisms we are only just beginning to understand."

This work is funded by grants from the UW-Madison Graduate School and the National Science Foundation.

Note: This story has been adapted from a news release issued by University of Wisconsin-Madison.

InvestorDaily

MIS sales top $1.26 billion

Agribusiness experiences strong growth

By Victoria Young
Thu 05 Jul 2007

Despite serious adversity, trade has lifted in the agribusiness MIS sector.

Sales in agribusiness managed investment schemes [MIS] have topped $1.26 billion, up 6 per cent from 2006, according to research house Adviser Edge.

Its success is despite drought, irrigation water security concerns and Australian Tax Office rulings affecting the sector.

"In past years all the gains have come from the likes of Great Southern, Timbercorp and Macquarie, whereas this year the boutique fund managers have increased sales, in many cases well in excess of 2006 levels," Adviser Edge managing director Shane Kelly said.

Gunns Plantations and Willmott Forests preformed well, up 98 per cent and 20 per cent respectively.

Companies relatively unknown outside of the MIS sector, like Rewards Group, Australian Agricultural Contracts, Australian Bight Abalone and Almond Investors were largely responsible for the financial gain, the research showed.

"Stand out sectors were horticulture, which accounted for over $335 million and high value timber, which at $275 million, or over 20 per cent of total sales, has undoubtedly taken market share away from pulpwood," Kelly said.

"The announcement of a secondary market for timber has no doubt helped and when non-forestry projects leave the market in 2009 expect to see the high value timber market attract even more attention," he said.

In the horticulture sector, olives and nut crops, had bumper sales of around $100 million and $168 million respectively.

The Adviser Edge survey measures 2007 MIS investment based on funds committed over the first three years of a project.

The bao of dried abalone

TAN BEE HONG

When gourmets talk about kon bao or dried abalone, they immediately think Japanese. But Johor-born Simon Koh Yong is changing the perception, writes TAN BEE HONG.

IN Simon Koh Yong's world, there are only two grades of dried abalone (kon bao) - premium and "garbage". It may sound a little harsh but for the man who has managed to nudge his way into being the world's fourth producer of premium dried abalone, there are no in-betweens, no compromises.

It has not been easy. The premium dried abalone monopoly has been held for generations by three Japanese families with the brand names Yoshihama, Oma and Mong Bao. They keep the secret of the process close to their hearts, passing it down from father to son.

Luckily Koh is a patient man. After all, it did take him 10 years to perfect the technique of drying abalone. Today, his Kohyong premium dried abalone has gained acceptance from gourmet chefs all over the world - even in Japan.

When he started, Koh had no teachers, except for perhaps a solitary book by a marine biologist that was guesswork at best and which he finally cast aside to experiment on his own.

Koh had not always been an abalone expert. His business was photo processing and he had a chain of outlets scattered all over Singapore. But entertaining at top restaurants honed his palate for gourmet food and in particular, he became fascinated with abalone.

He opened a restaurant in the 1980s and noted that though the Chinese were the biggest consumers of dried abalone in the world, all the top quality stuff came from Japan.

The Chinese has never produced good quality dried abalone. "What they had tasted like old leather shoes... garbage," says Koh.

A few years later, he migrated to Australia with one dream – to produce dried abalone that would give the Japanese a run for their money.

But that was easier said than done. Apart from his obsession and tons of determination, Koh literally had to start from ground zero. He knew that to realise his dream, he had first to understand the shellfish in its environment.

To get to the bottom of the matter, Koh took scuba diving lessons that allowed him to study abalone seabeds and understand what factors affected the growth and taste of the abalone.

"You are what you eat. Similarly, the quality and type of seaweed in each area affects the abalone there," he says.

He even went back to university in Melbourne to take up food science and technology and the physics associated with not only the making of but also the cooking of dried abalone.

Two years after he started on his quest, Koh presented his first dried abalone to master chefs who immediately rejected it. Undeterred, he sent samples every year to top abalone chefs but he continued to be rejected. A lesser man would have given up but not Koh.

He laughs at the memory. "It was only in the eighth year that I was told I may be on to something and finally, 10 years after I started, the abalone experts told me I had come close to the benchmark of the Japanese premium dried abalone," he says.

Today, Kohyong premium dried abalone is ranked fourth in the gourmet world, right after those produced by the three Japanese families. Since 1995, it has been exported to many countries, including China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, US and Japan.

Koh confesses that, like the Japanese giants, he too will be passing on his secrets of processing dried abalone to his two sons. As a silence of disbelief falls on the largely female members of the media gathered, he laughs and says: "The truth is, I have no daughters."

Drying abalone is a long process. "Abalone has a black pigment. When the abalone is taken out of its shell, we cover it with a lot of salt for two days to get rid of the black pigment and to give it a richer flavour," Koh explains.

"After that, the salt is washed off and the abalone is cooked till it is so soft that I can poke a straw through it. Then it is dried in the sun or oven. In Japan, abalone is sometimes dried in the cold winter wind. Drying takes three to four months, depending on the size of the abalone."

So how does one judge a premium grade abalone? "In one word, tangxin," says Koh. This is loosely translated as a resilient texture that is both silky and chewy (without being tough) at the same time. "When one cuts the abalone, it should stick to the knife and when you chew the abalone, it should stick to your teeth, a bit like nian gao (Chinese New Year glutinous rice cake)."

The afternoon spent with Koh is proving to be profitable in more ways than one. For instance, Koh wears a most amused smile when asked what brand oyster sauce should one use to cook abalone.

"No, you shouldn't use oyster sauce with premium grade abalone," he states firmly. "Let the essence of the abalone speak for itself. After all, when we cook dried abalone, we have to use superior stock made with quality ingredients like chicken and ham. So why spoil it with a dash of oyster sauce?"

He also recommends cutting a whole abalone into segments - "like cutting mooncake" - rather than the more common practice of slicing the mollusc. His rationale is simply logic. The skirt (sides) is silky and soft while the centre muscle is more tangxin with better flavour. Cutting it in segments would mean one can experience both textures with every piece.

Koh warns against "bargains". Japanese premium dried abalone sells at between US$3,000 and US$4,000 a kg. Kohyong abalone retails at about US$1,000. "So there is absolutely no way anyone can offer premium abalone for say, US$200," he says.

Abalone is categorised by "heads" - 12 head abalone means 12 pcs per kati or about 20 per kg. The fewer heads, the bigger the abalone and the more expensive.

As it takes years for abalone to grow to a large size, it's generally agreed that the bigger and older the abalone is, the

better the taste. Cultured abalone needs three to four years to about eight or nine cm. A 15-head abalone takes seven years to grow. Kohyong abalones are usually bigger and take about 12-15 years to grow.

"Abalone hibernates in winter. It stops eating and growing. In China, cultured abalone is sometimes towed south to warmer waters in Fujien in winter to trick the abalone into continuing to eat and grow," Koh reveals.

Also, most people think that abalone is high in cholesterol. They couldn't be more mistaken, says Koh. Abalone is very nutritious as it is high in protein and contains vitamins and minerals such as calcium, iron, potassium and zinc.

Finally, why should one buy dried abalone when the fresh is cheaper? Koh says that fresh abalone can never measure up to premium dried abalone. During the drying process, the flavours are much more concentrated and even the texture changes.

Preparing dried abalone at home is a time-consuming process that takes days to prepare properly. Realising that, Koh has come up with a vacuum pack "ready-to-eat" abalone that keeps for up to a year. That would be a boon for today's harried families.

Taste of perfection

After the enlightening lesson on premium dried abalone, our little media group could hardly wait for a bite of the real thing. Simon Koh Yong is busy stirring and reheating the abalone in a clay pot and the aroma, I swear, made a few bellies growl in anticipation.

When we are finally served the braised abalone, we all take a deep breath to fully appreciate the wonderful aroma and for a nano-minute, we leaned over our plates to admire the whole abalone sitting in glistening sauce. This is not oyster sauce but the superior stock that the abalone had been cooking in for hours earlier.

Then we take Koh's advice seriously about the best way to cut the abalone. First we halve it, right across the centre. Oops, my knife feels like it's caught in between suction pads! "Yes, that's the sign of a good abalone," Koh assures us.

Next, we slice off bite-size wedges, from the centre to the side and pop these into our mouths. A word of warning here: Don't order abalone if you're rushed for time. This is one shellfish that demands respect from the diner. So, if you're in a hurry, head for the nearest golden arches instead!

Abalone must be slowly chewed and savoured. Each time we chew, we could feel the release of flavour and the abalone sticks ever so slightly to the teeth in the most pleasing way. Not quite at all like nian gao (Chinese New Year rice cake) which envelops your teeth in gluey sweetness.

Halfway through the shellfish, a bite of green vegetable like broccoli will cleanse the palate, preparing it for the next bite.

The braised Kohyong premium dried abalone is on offer from now until July 15 at a very special price at the Chef Rasa Sayang Sharksfin Restaurant in Jalan Imbi, Kuala Lumpur. Each piece will cost RM238 instead of the normal price of RM338.

The dish is also available as part of a promotion menu priced at RM500 nett per person. The six-course menu begins with Baked Cod Fish with Goose Liver and the Braised Abalone.

The slice of cod is slightly caramelised on the outside and sweet and juicy inside. Sitting on top of it is a piece of foie gras, lightly panfried with a salt crust that's teasing on the palate while the caramelised sweetness of the cod matches well the smooth, silky richness of the liver. Sidekicks here are bits of alfafa sprouts, shitake mushroom and a fresh button mushroom.

Dou Miao with Fish Roe and Crab Meat is guaranteed to knock your socks off. The dou miao (pea sprouts) are not the spindly, crunchy, white-stemmed version you'd find in the local markets. Imported from Hong Kong, these are leafy rather than stemmy, soft, sweet, smooth and delicate in flavour.

It is topped with a thickened white crabmeat sauce and a spoonful of tobiko (flying fish roe).

Other dishes in the promotion menu include Sharksfin with American Ginseng in Coconut and Baked Fresh South African Lobster in Chef's Special Broth.

For dessert, there's Bird's Nest Egg Tart with a flaky pastry shell filled with smooth egg custard and bird's nest.

The promotion is on till July 13.

CHEF RASA SAYANG SHARKSFIN RESTAURANT
104-106 Jalan Imbi, Kuala Lumpur
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WILD ABALONE WIPED OUT

CATASTROPHIC signs ... dead abalone are being washed ashore at Murrell's Beach, with professional fisherman Vin Gannon giving up after collecting three shopping bags full of dead abalone in a short time. SUPPLIED PICTURES

portland observer
4 June 2007

By BILL MELDRUM

A PORTLAND professional fisherman has found disturbing evidence which indicates the wild abalone stock at Murrell's Reef has been wiped out by the herpes-like ganglioneuritis virus.

Vin Gannon, who is also the Victorian Abalone Divers Association executive director, spent several days late last week at Murrell's Beach where hundreds of dead abalone have been washed ashore. "It is definitely the virus," he said. The latest event also prompted Western Abalone Diver's Association executive officer Harry Peeters to hit out at State Government proposals to allocate a further 41 offshore Crown lease sites for marine aquaculture farm development in Port Phillip Bay and near Portland. Those allocations are expected soon, and form part of the draft Victorian Aquaculture Stategy and Action Plan released for public comment last week by Fisheries Minister Joe Helper. Mr Peeters said it was absolutely ludicrous that further aquaculture sites be allocated in an area such as Portland which was open to some of worst weather and ocean conditions in Victoria. "We have said it again and again, where you have aquaculture farms, you increase the likelihood of disease which has catastrophic results on wild resource stocks," he said. Mr Gannon said he went to Murrell's Beach late last week and had given up picking up the dead abalone at three shopping bags. "I managed to get around to a section of the coast that had a more boulder-strewn shoreline ... there was a large number of cracks that had heaps of newly dead shells as well as dead and rotting abalone," he said. "At one area of the beach I collected up one full shopping bag in about 10 minutes ... Within about 30 or so minutes another 13 shells with the remains of meat in them had washed up in the same area." On a further visit to the area on Saturday, Mr Gannon said he had found a new patch of about 30 to 40 shells washed up on the beach. "Further down where most of the other shell had washed up, there is a heap of new shiny shells that has washed up, and I do mean heaps," he said. "Unfortunately, there is a large amount of weed on the beach ... there was hardly any of the shell with meat in it, which may mean the virus is slowing down, or there are no more abs (abalone) left." He said the rocky boulder area had a lot of new shell that had washed up on the beach, with most of the cracks in the rocks having an abalone shell in them, some with four or five shells. Mr Gannon said it appeared the whole section of the Murrell's reef area had been affected by the virus. The virus was detected in early 2006 and affected abalone farms at Allestree and Port Fairy. It was also detected in wild stocks near Port Fairy and has since been detected as far west as near

Cape Bridgewater. An exclusion zone remains in place between Port Fairy and The Crags. Scientists have yet to find any method of containing the virus.

June 29, 2007

F.D.A. Curbs Sale of 5 Seafoods Farmed in China

Casey Kelbaugh for The New York Times

The sale of shrimp from China has been banned unless tests show it is free of contaminants.

By ANDREW MARTIN

In the latest move against Chinese imports, the Food and Drug Administration yesterday effectively blocked the sale of five types of farm-raised seafood from China because of repeated instances of contamination from unapproved animal drugs and food additives.

The F.D.A. said it decided to take the action after years of warnings and even a visit to Chinese fish ponds that resulted in no signs of improvement. But Dr. David Acheson, the F.D.A.'s assistant commissioner for food protection, stressed that the seafood posed no immediate health threat, though long-term consumption could result in health problems.

“There’s been a continued pattern of violation with no signs of abatement,” Dr. Acheson said.

The seafood announcement comes after a string of reports in recent months about Chinese imports that have failed to meet American health and safety standards: pet food ingredients, toothpaste, toy trains and tires.

The seafood move, however, may have the broadest impact on China, the world’s biggest producer of farm-raised fish. The country is also the biggest foreign supplier of seafood to the United States, accounting for 22 percent of the total imports.

The seafood named in the F.D.A.’s “import alert” are shrimp; catfish; eel; basa, which are similar to catfish; and dace, similar to carp. Some of the contaminants cited have been found to cause cancer in laboratory animals, while others may increase antibiotic resistance. Under the import alert, the seafood can be sold in the United States only if importers provide independent testing that shows the seafood does not contain the contaminants.

Officials at the Chinese Embassy in Washington did not respond to messages seeking comment.

The announcement fueled concerns about both the integrity of Chinese products and the effectiveness of the American system for identifying contaminated food.

“The list continues to grow of Chinese imports that are dangerous to American consumers,” said Senator Richard J. Durbin, Democrat of Illinois. “There reaches a point where I think it’s clear, if China wants to live in the 21st century, then they have to produce to those standards.”

After the F.D.A. announcement, Mr. Durbin and Representative Rosa L. DeLauro, Democrat of Connecticut, called on federal officials to establish a food safety agreement with China.

Ms. DeLauro, a frequent critic of the F.D.A.’s oversight of food safety, also questioned why the agency waited so long to act.

The banned substances, primarily antifungals and antibacterials, have been used by some Chinese farmers to prevent disease among their seafood. Because they are often crowded into ponds, farmed fish and shrimp can become sick as the quality of the water becomes polluted by waste and feed.

“You may have 10 to 20 times the density of fish as in a natural environment,” said Robert P. Romaire, professor of aquaculture at Louisiana State University.

American regulators allow the use of a limited number of antibiotics. But Mr. Romaire said some of the Chinese farmers used antibiotics indiscriminately.

None of the antibiotics and food additives found in the Chinese seafood — nitrofuran, malachite green, gentian violet and fluoroquinolones — are on the approved list of regulators. Long-term exposure to nitrofuran, malachite green and gentian violet, which are also illegal in China, has been shown to cause cancer in laboratory animals.

Fluoroquinolones are allowed in Chinese aquaculture. Nevertheless, they are not permitted in fish in the United States because their use may increase antibiotic resistance for people.

The problems with contaminated Chinese seafood imports date back at least six years. Before this week, the F.D.A. had issued other, more narrow warnings about contaminated Chinese seafood beginning in 2001.

In the fall of 2006, F.D.A. officials went to China to inspect aquaculture operations and found “the residue control program ineffective.” The agency increased its inspections of Chinese seafood, starting last October, and, officials said, found that 15 percent of the samples were contaminated.

China’s seafood shipments to the United States were valued at $1.9 billion in 2006, a 193 percent increase over 2001, according to the Department of Agriculture. The biggest American imports from China are shrimp, tilapia, scallops, cod and pollock, federal statistics show, although only shrimp was affected by yesterday’s announcement.

Several Southern states, which have their own catfish and shrimp-farming operations, have already blocked the sale of some Chinese seafood. Their rules say that the seafood can be sold only if it passes testing that proves it has no contaminants.

The state of Alabama announced its ban after testing found 14 of 20 samples contained fluoroquinolones. Mississippi officials found that 18 of 26 samples of Chinese catfish were contaminated with fluoroquinolones.

“We are saying all Chinese seafood that comes in here has to be tested prior to sale,” said Bob Odom, Louisiana’s agriculture and forestry commissioner. “The simple reason for that is we found a lot of it that is contaminated.”

The F.D.A. maintains a database of imported products that are prevented from entering the United States because they do not comply with American standards. In May, for instance, the agency turned away 165 shipments from China, 49 of them seafood.

Monkfish was rejected for being filthy and unfit to be eaten, the records show. Frozen catfish nuggets were turned away because they contained animal drugs. Tilapia fillets were contaminated with salmonella.

The problems were even worse in April, when 257 shipments from China were rejected, including 68 of seafood. Frozen eel contained pesticides, frozen channel catfish had salmonella and frozen yellowfin steaks were filthy, the records show.

In a report on the F.D.A.'s oversight released in May, Food and Water Watch, a Washington-based nonprofit group, found that more than 60 percent of the seafood that was rejected at the border by the F.D.A. came from China.

The group's report also found that the percentage of seafood shipments that were pulled out for laboratory analysis declined in recent years, from 0.88 percent in 2003 to 0.59 percent in 2006. Over all, about 2 percent of seafood imported from 2003 to 2006 received either a sensory examination for color and smell or a more detailed laboratory analysis.

Of the seafood that was refused at the border, filth was the top listed reason and salmonella was second, with shrimp accounting for about half of those cases, the report found.

Of the shipments rejected for animal drug residues in 2006, 63 percent were from China, the report found. Vietnam ranked second in rejections for animal drug residue, 11 percent.

F.D.A. officials said yesterday, however, that the agency inspected a higher percentage of Chinese seafood imports — 5 percent — because of continuing concerns about farm-raised fish from that country.

ABC News

Abalone group fears virus not being treated seriously

Posted Thu Jun 28, 2007 2:00pm AEST

- **Map:** Warrnambool 3280

The Victorian Abalone Divers Association is frustrated by the State Government and Fisheries Victoria's handling of a deadly abalone virus.

The virus has now spread 160 kilometres along the south-west coast.

The chief executive of the Victorian Abalone Divers Association, Vincent Gannon, is backing calls by local MP Denis Napthine for an independent inquiry.

Mr Gannon says the Government appears to be ignoring the severity of the problem.

"To work out how to best recover the industry, how to best ... look to the future, how to best protect the environment ... at this stage everyone on the department seems to have their heads in the sand, saying 'we're not willing to listen, we're not willing to consider it'," he said.

"From our perspective, we've been working our businesses for 45 years - we had one of the best industries in the world and it's now been turned into a basket case."

The executive director of Fisheries Victoria denies it is failing to take the issue seriously.

Peter Appleford says the department has promoted ongoing meetings to discuss the disease, but cannot do any more than what is currently being done to stop the virus spreading.

"The department doesn't believe there is a need for an independent inquiry," he said.

"We've been led by the chief veterinary officer in this response, and it's been overseen by national experts through the national forum of chief veterinary officers and it's also been reviewed by an international expert that has said we've responded in the appropriate way."

Abalone industry aghast at more quota cuts

Posted Thu Jun 28, 2007 12:00pm AEST

- **Map:** Bega 2550

The abalone industry on the far south coast of New South Wales is reeling today after the latest round of cuts to quotas.

It has been revealed that the total allowable commercial catch will be reduced this season under a state Primary Industries move, which it says will help rebuild stocks.

The plan will also outlaw commercial harvesting north of Tuross Lake as part of fishing restrictions in the new Batemans Marine Park.

But John Smythe from Merimbula says he does not understand the Government's policy at a time when abalone numbers are increasing.

"We had three to four years ago some radical cuts in the quota of up to 70 tonne a year and in the last two years we have seen the result of that come through the fishery as improvement in catches," he said.

"So we have generally been a bit more optimistic particularly in the last 12 months and to see it further reduced is another kick in the backside."