

Deadly rat disease death sparks food storage alert

AN ALERT on the deadly dangers to the public from Weil's disease, which is spread by rats, was issued yesterday by the Food Safety Authority as it emerged that seven people have contracted it in the past 18 months.

The recent death of a young Limerick man from the disease highlighted the importance of rodent proofing, a statement from the Authority said.

The Authority (FSA) called on industry to take measures to ensure their premises are free

from potential contamination. Chief specialist environmental health official, Ray Ellard, stressed that preventative measures did not relate solely to the public but also to those engaged in food processing and packaging industries.

"There are many products that are eaten straight from the packet and the food industry at all stages of the food chain must be aware of their responsibility to consumers," he said. "The integrity of the packaging is just as important as the that of the product inside."

The Authority says the disease can infect humans through contact with water, food or soil containing urine. It can affect both

humans and animals. It is an occupational hazard for people who work outdoors or with animals, such as farmers, fishermen, and sewer workers. The disease is also associated with swimming in lakes or rivers that may be contaminated with animal urine.

After an incubation period of approximately ten days, flu like symptoms of fever, headache, chills, muscle aches, vomiting, jaundice and anaemia may appear. Fatalities, while rare, may occur if it is left untreated.

Mr Ellard said he did not want to cause

public alarm and said the link between drinking from a bottle or can "is very tenuous... We want the public to continue enjoying their food and drink, but we want industry to take a few simple steps to ensure that their premises are free from potential contamination".

The Authority said last night that of those who were confirmed to have contracted the disease last year, four were from Dublin, one in Carlow and one in Tipperary.

The authority said industry can greatly reduce the risk of contamination by following preventative measures:

● Rodent control, through ensuring the

structure of buildings are sound, with no broken airbricks, no gaps under doors and no piles of rubbish left unattended, especially in areas where foodstuffs are stored.

● The bacteria *Leptospira*, which causes the disease, will be killed by good sanitation. Equipment, fittings and fixtures should be installed correctly to allow for effective cleaning and pest control.

● Wear protective clothing and cover any cuts or abrasions with a waterproof dressing when taking part in recreational or work activities that might result in contact with contaminated water.

Girl (16) serious in outbreak of brain illness

By RALPH RIEGEL

THERE have been four suspected meningitis outbreaks in Cork city and county, one of which involves a 16-year old girl now seriously ill. Two of the cases, including the 16-year old student, are from the city; the others are from different locations in the county.

Two each are young children and teenagers with three boys and one girl. Last night, the Southern Health Board declined to comment on specific cases. However, the most serious is understood to be the 16-year old from Regina Mundi College who is critical.

Three of the patients are being treated at Cork University Hospital.

So far this year, the SHB has recorded 54 suspected meningitis cases - a decline of four on the same period last year. Of the notified cases, 18 proved unconfirmed, 36 were confirmed with 48 in Cork and six in Kerry.

One person has already died from bacterial meningitis in the SHB region this year. Last night, the SHB repeated their warning that early detection and prompt administration of strong antibiotics are vital for successful treatment.

Symptoms include a rash or purple skin blotches; severe headaches and nausea; dizziness and limb pains; aversion to bright lights; children and infants difficult to wake.

Towns in fight for status

THE mayors of Sligo, Drogheda, Wexford, Clonmel and Kilkenny are to meet on Monday to discuss the threatened downgrading of their administrations from borough to town council in the new Local Government Bill.

The mayors are meeting at Sligo City Hall with the chairperson of the Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland, Aileen Fenn.

The meeting is the latest in a campaign to preserve the status and services of borough councils under threat of downgrading.

Objectors out to block 1,000-job Intel plant



By TREACY HOGAN, Environment Correspondent

A £1.5bn expansion plan by Intel involving 1,000 new jobs at its Co Kildare plant has been appealed to An Bord Pleanála citing claims of environmental airborne pollution and traffic problems in the area.

The appeal by local man John Colgan, of the Toll House, against planning permission, is being backed up by Desmond Guinness, owner of Leixlip Castle. Cf Pleanála is not expected to decide the appeal before October.

The emission and health claims are emphatically rejected by Intel, while the Environmental Protection Agency insists that the company is fully compliant with its integrated pollution control licence.

Permission for the massive expansion was granted by Kildare County Council in May but Bord Pleanála is not expected to decide the appeal before October.

Although the Board is not permitted to release details of objections sent to it, Desmond Guinness has confirmed that he has sent a signed letter expressing fears over environmental pollution from emissions. W the letter also expresses concern at increased traffic levels.

A number of other locals have written to the Bord about the matter. Mr Colgan says in the appeal he has no objection in principle to Intel developing their lands to expand their microchip business. However, he believes insufficient conditions have been attached to their doing so.

HEALTH FEARS

He claims the expansion as presently proposed will increase health hazards to the Leixlip community, especially due to commuter traffic, vibration and exhaust emissions.

He questions the adequacy of the State's environmental and proposed expansion, which he describes as "premature".

An observation to Bord Pleanála by Desmond Guinness states that he endorses Mr Colgan's suggestion that the development is pre-

mature pending the completion of the M4 interchange. He also expresses fears over animal health. The observation to the board claims he was aware not that Intel discharges many tons of fine particulates, toxic gases and carcinogenic solvents into the atmosphere, including hydrochloric and hydrofluoric acid and copper salts of these acids.

"As these are related to the production of wafer units at the Intel factory, it seems self evident that if the permission sought is granted without substantial changes in pollution abatement, the environment will deteriorate further," it claims.

REBUTTAL

An Environmental Impact assessment carried out on behalf of Intel and lodged with the planning board states that there will not be any adverse impact on air quality in the local region resulting from the proposed expansion.

It says proposed control measures will ensure that emissions to the atmosphere are within standards and guidelines.

An Intel spokesman said they had lodged a rebuttal to Mr Colgan's appeal and were confident due process would take place at Bord Pleanála.

He said the appeal claims were without foundation and said that Intel was typically operating at somewhere between 75pc to 95pc below their EPA licence limit.

"We are utterly confident that our environmental performance is to a very high standard and the EPA is also on record with that view," he added.

The EPA has told Leixlip Town Commissioners that Intel has complied with all conditions of its licence and that it has no reason to believe that their activities are having any adverse impact on the local environment.

The agency said this was confirmed in audits, site inspections, monitoring returns and sampling/analyses carried out by the agency.

Intel says the present road network was operating close to capacity at peak hour periods but a link road to the M4 motorway bypassing Leixlip was due to start this autumn and finish in 2002 just before the opening of the new plant helping greatly to relieve pressure on the centre of Leixlip.



Early arrivals at the Fleadh in Ennis yesterday were (from top) Niamh Hand and Aelie Mullins from Mahabé, Co Dublin and Derie Miller from Ennisclorthy. Picture: PJ Browne

Musicians dust down the fiddles as Fleadh kicks off

By SARAH MURPHY

A THIRTY-five-foot sculpture of a man towering over the river Slaney is sure to capture the attention of some of the 200,000 visitors expected to attend this year's Ennisclorthy Fleadh Cheoil Na hÉireann.

The Millais Athol sculpture has been designed by local theatre group Buí Boig to celebrate the Fleadh's 50th anniversary and the increasing number of people attending the three-day event, which starts today.

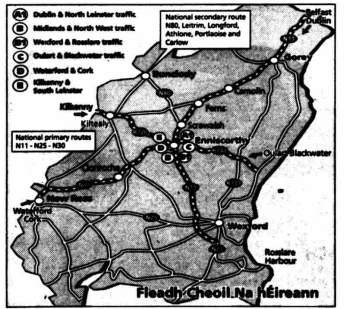
Over 10,000 performers are set to entertain the crowds and compete in over 40 competitions. The Fleadh will be opened by the chairman of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, Pádraig MacSúilleabhain.

Over the weekend, the Millennium stage will host three concerts featuring some of the best traditional Irish performers.

"This evening, Irish bod Dervish take to the stage, while tomorrow traditional Irish accordion player John Whelan will perform. On Sunday, the Fleadh will draw in a lively close with an outdoor ceilí featuring the Killeenors Cell Band.

"This is one of the biggest festivals in the country, that will bring in £1m in revenue to Ennisclorthy this year said Eddie Naugle, Public Relations Officer for the event.

"The popularity of the festival is based on the lively atmosphere, the chance to meet old friends and the tradition associated with the event.



"The numbers of young people playing traditional instruments is continuously growing. Scott Elgie, a five-day summer school covering all aspects of traditional Irish music, song and dance, has attracted over 600 children from countries such as Sweden, Denmark, Holland and Germany."

Funding for the fleadh, which costs £300,000 to run, comes primarily from the Millennium Festival, Guinness Ireland and numerous private sponsors.

NEWS IN BRIEF

New blood board jobs

UP to 24 new jobs are to be created by the Blood Transfusion Services Board in Carlow town by mid-September.

It involves the co-ordination of the STSB's mobile team with the whole of the south-east region covering Carlow, Kildare, Waterford, Wicklow, Louth, Wicklow, Offaly and Tipperary.

Lucky escape for teenagers

TWO teenagers had a lucky escape after getting into swimming difficulties at Ardara Beach, Co Waterford.

The pair aged 12 and 15 were caught by strong tidal currents but were rescued by three adults at the scene. They were brought to Waterford Regional Hospital suffering from mild hypothermia.

Crash victim dies in hospital

A 26-YEAR-OLD woman injured in a road accident in Co Armagh at the weekend died in hospital yesterday.

Clara Mary McManus from Camlough was injured when her Renault Megane left the Nerry Road outside the village and crashed into a wall. No other vehicle was involved.

EU standard 'too low'

THE Department of Agriculture has been accused of adopting a new set of organic farming standards which are lower than those already in place.

Organic Trust, IOFGA and Dunster Standards Ltd, attacked the department for accepting an EU minimum standard as the Irish Organic standard. They maintain the new standards fall considerably short of what they expect of organic food.

Man killed in cliff fall

A 41-year-old man was killed after falling from a cliff in Co Antrim yesterday.

Police said the man had been walking with his 14-year-old son when he slipped and fell at Blackrocks, Portrush. Police had still not released his name last night.

Diploma Courses leading to CAREERS in HOLISTIC MEDICINE

Based on the PROVEN SUCCESS SYSTEM of Dr. Tony Guise M.B., Doctor of Clinical Hypnotherapy

- Ki Massage Therapy - London City & Guilds Cert.
- Holistic Dietetics
- Yoga Instructor

Courses are part-time, evenings or weekends beginning Wed. 27 Sept. (Evening) and Sat. 14 Oct. (Weekend). Fees: Ki Massage Therapy £190. Yoga £100. Holistic Dietetics £200.

For illustrated prospectus call: **011-800-493 8304211**

CULTURE ASSOCIATION of Ecosse St, Dublin 7. 01-2662249

Notice

The Office located at 85 - 93 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2 will be closed to personal callers from 28th August - 3rd November 2000 inclusive for refurbishment. You can of course continue to contact us by telephone at (01) 6474000.

During this time our staff will be happy to deal with your queries at either of the following locations:

Central Revenue Information Office
Cathedral Street (off Upper O'Connell St.)
Dublin 1.

Revenue Information Office
Level 2, The Square
Tallaght
Dublin 24.

These offices will be open to the public from 09.30hrs to 5.00hrs each day Monday to Friday.

We regret any inconvenience caused.

Revenue
Website <http://www.revenue.ie>

FG in 'pupil wage' promise

FINE Gael yesterday promised an Educational Youth Wage to encourage early school leavers to stay at school past the age of 15.

Opposition leader John Bruton said that in Government his party would introduce a wage of between £28 and £36 per week.

"This will be means-tested and targeted at low income families where the greatest financial pressure to leave school early and to work exists," he said.

The wage is part of a £100m package promised by Fine Gael to tackle educational disadvantage.

Other elements also include local education networks to provide services in-school and outside schools; a resource fund for in-school programmes to pay for initiatives designed to meet children's particular needs and the promotion of new assessment methods.

Toxic scare halts harvest of shellfish

HIGH levels of toxic algae in shellfish has led to the temporary closure of 33 shellfish production units along the west coast.

If humans consume these shellfish it can cause a variety of health problems. Shellfish farmers are taking a financial hammering again this year because of a ban on harvesting in a number of bays and estuaries.

Rises in water temperature and the runoff of nitrates and phosphates from the mountains are blamed for an increase in algae which causes toxins.

Although the bloom is not harmful to shellfish, it can cause diarrhetic shellfish poisoning (DSP) in humans who consume the shellfish.

The Irish Shellfish Association has called for more research into the causes and a more frequent monitoring programme for the bays.

Meanwhile, The Shannon Regional Fisheries Board is to undertake a study of Lough Ree after the decimation of pike stocks. The deterioration in water quality on the River Shannon is causing serious concern.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Business Training Group

Staff Appraisal

Appraisal is about improving the performance of your staff. A good staff appraisal system will motivate and re-motivate staff leading to greater commitment and improved results. This course covers effective systems, appraisal techniques, the likely problems and their solutions.

Course Contents

- Appraisal - why bother?
- Designing an effective appraisal system
- Getting management and staff approval
- Giving feedback
- Interviewing techniques
- Goal setting
- Motivation

1 Day Course - September 6th

For more information call **(01) 6222667** or **(021) 4278511**

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LTD
Business and Staff Training