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The Conservation Officers Service is warning aquarium users after invasive and potentially destructive mussels were found in moss balls from a pet store. (BC Conservation Officers Service/Facebook)

Conservation inspects more than 600 B.C. stores for invasive mussels

Since found to be sold in Washington, two B.C. residents find invasive mussels within product

PHIL MCLACHLAN / Mar. 12, 2021 8:50 a.m. / [NEWS](#)



A week after discovering invasive mussels sold in a pet store in Terrace, B.C. conservation officers have inspected more than 600 retail stores in the provinces.

In addition to the ones found in Terrace last week, the B.C. Conservation Officer Service has discovered an additional instance of the invasive mussels, in Invermere.

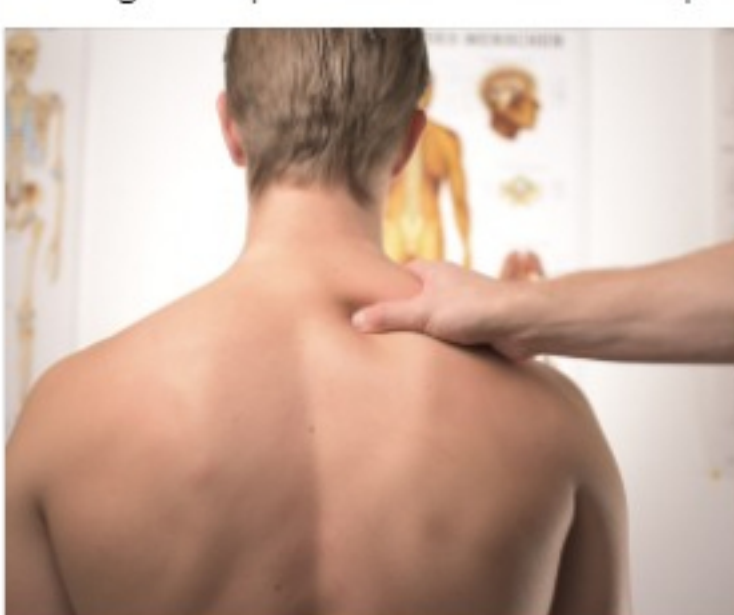
Additionally, the government of B.C. announced March 9 that zebra mussels in moss balls were found in the Lower Mainland.

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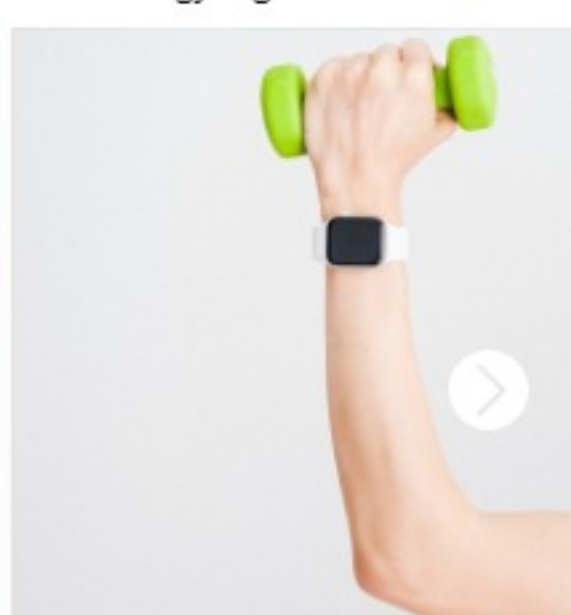


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“People have also reported finding the mussel-infested moss balls in their aquariums across western Canada and several U.S. states,” states the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change.

Last week, the B.C. CO Service was notified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that the invasive Zebra mussels were being sold at Petco in Seattle. As Petco is associated with other suppliers in Canada such as Pet Smart, this triggered a large response by conservation officers.

READ MORE: [Aquarium users in B.C. warned after invasive mussels found at pet store](#)

“We’re hitting them, and hitting them hard,” said Sgt. Josh Lockwood with the BC Conservation Officer Service.

On March 10, a woman called the CO Service from Invermere, saying she found some Zebra Mussels within a product she ordered online. However, Lockwood confirmed none of the mussels have been found in stores in the Okanagan, to date.

Zebra Mussels have been known to populate and take over freshwater bodies of water, sucking the nutrients from them and depriving native species of food. One female can have up to one million babies a year. They are prohibited in Western Canada.

In places like Osoyoos, the introduction of these invasive mussels could massively impact the salmon run.

Other bodies of water like Lake Winnipeg (Manitoba), Lake Mead (Nevada), Paradise Lake (Arizona), where the mussels have already set up shop, have been drastically affected. One can’t visit the beach in bare feet, because there are too many razor-sharp shells, Lockwood explained.

He further explained the mussels have a huge impact on tourism, water, agriculture, hydro, power – something that would cost B.C. about \$42 million per year if they reach provincial waters.

“They’re almost impossible to eradicate, that’s the problem,” said Lockwood. “This is a concern to everybody so we’re trying to stop the importation of these into the country.”

Those who think they have found a Zebra mussel should also contact the RAPP line at 1-877-952-7277. Proper disposal includes placing the mussels in a plastic bag for 24 hours, then boil them for a minute, then place them back into the bag once they’ve cooled, and dispose of them in the trash.

Another instance of invasive species being introduced in B.C. has affected residents and recreation near Summerland.

Beginning April 1 and until further notice, Garnet Lake in Summerland will be closed to angling. The reason for the provincial government’s announcement is the illegal introduction of large-mouth bass into the lake.