



Marine Stinger Management Newsletter

Vol. 2. No. 12

December 2006

In this Issue

	Page
Editor's note	2
Mark the date: Calendar of upcoming events	2
Risk Management Forum update	3
How you can help	4
Treatment of stings has not changed	5
Where to find out more information	5



The life of the beach.



A story with a happy ending

On the afternoon of the 4th of December 2006, an 8 year old girl was badly stung by a box jellyfish at Old Mapoon near Weipa. She had an estimated 3+ metres of visible sting. She collapsed within a couple minutes of the sting, feeling dizzy and disorientated. It is with great pleasure that I am able to tell this story with a happy ending, but with great sadness that I am reminded of those who have different endings to their stories.

The Marine Stinger Road Show, as it affectionately became known along the way, went very well. We visited a lot of little towns and communities that had never before had someone speak to them about marine stinger safety. It was humbling to see more people turning out for talks than we had chairs available, kids doing the Stingray Shuffle after learning it at school, a never-ending array of really good questions, and overwhelmingly positive written comments on the evaluation sheets.

While I am exhausted by the long hours and many miles, I am invigorated by the energy that was generated by the people who came to the seminars and workshops – thanks to every one, it was an incredible experience that I will never forget. To me, the take-home message was that there is still a lot more work to be done in terms of communicating a balanced and accurate message, getting protective clothing widely adopted, and helping people feel comfortable having a good time at the beach in a safe way.

Dr. Lisa-ann Gershwin – Editor, Marine Stinger Management Newsletter
National Marine Stinger Advisor – Surf Life Saving
Mob. 0409 627 869 – Email: lisa.gershwin@jcu.edu.au

Mark the Date: Calendar

- End of December to beginning of January is typically the highest risk part of the stinger season; extra care should be taken in wearing protective clothing during this time.
- A schedule of seminars and workshops is currently being assembled for 2007 - please contact the SLSQ Marine Stinger Coordinator, Dr. Lisa-ann Gershwin 0409 627 869 if you would like to schedule an event.

Did you know...

Box jellyfish can live at least two summers, meaning that they are still around over the winter.

There is evidence that they congregate in deeper waters and will come ashore if the conditions are favourable, regardless of time of year.



Risk Management Forums: update

A sincere and hearty thank you to all who turned out and sent email comments for the Risk Management Forums in Townsville and Cairns. It was great to see so many busy people making such a large effort to share ideas and make a difference.

An overwhelming number of excellent ideas were generated; some of the ones that stick out as priorities include:

- The need for solutions rather than “just more information”
- Recognition-and-treatment flow-chart for dive operators clearly indicating emergency procedures
- Availability of protective clothing hire at beaches
- Media information sessions to provide media organisations with correct information
- An Australian Standard for protective clothing and sting creams
- Periodic information and scenario workshops for dive boat staff and island resort staff
- Consistent messages across regions and information providers, focusing on sting prevention
- Safety education in remote communities
- Protective clothing that is fashionable for kids and adults, e.g., name brands, sports teams, and marketed by famous people
- Work closer with media about being pro-active rather than re-active
- Local action groups such as the Whitsundays Marine Stinger Management Committee
- Integrate stinger safety message into total safety message to public
- Find a name for protective clothing other than “stinger suit” to incorporate its utility for sun safety and keeping sand out of shorts as well
- Research into medications to use in an offshore situation to lower blood pressure in the case of a bad sting
- Clear up public confusion between box jellyfish and Irukandjis, which often leads to misjudging the risk of one or the other
- Providing useful and realistic safety guidance for the recreational fishing community
- More focus on safety education for school children
- Safety information provided to tourists before they reach the region (e.g., airline info, booking info), presented in a positive and non-freaky way
- Come up with some sort of slogan or memorable saying about stinger safety
- Clearer information on legal liability for operators and councils (e.g., vinegar, suits, etc)
- More media coverage of the positive aspects of stinger research and stinger management
- More guidance about answering frequently asked questions for visitors centres and booking agents, as well as reef operators and hotel staff

A report of the forum results is still being drafted and will be distributed for review to those who attended and other interested parties. For further input or information, contact the SLSQ Marine Stinger Coordinator, Dr. Lisa-ann Gershwin on 0409 627 869.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Set a good example

People often ask what they can do to help manage marine stingers in an effective and balanced way. The answer is simple: if each of us practice safe behaviours, then we dramatically reduce the risk of being stung, and we will set a good example for others. Tips for enjoying tropical waters safely are:

- Wear a full-body lycra suit
- Swim at patrolled beaches between the red and yellow flags
- Don't enter the water on days when the beaches are closed due to jellyfish or other dangerous marine life

Website development

The Marine Stingers website, www.marinestingers.com, is currently under construction, and Surf Life Saving would value your input for features and information that you would like available. Some of the features currently planned include:

- A more 'user-friendly' format
- Catalog of available resources (e.g., posters, brochures, DVD's)
- All resources downloadable
- Comparative facts, figures, maps, that put stingers into perspective
- Frequently asked questions
- Myths and truths
- Current state-of-knowledge statements for stingers and treatments
- Sting-reporting capability
- Identification tools for stings and stingers

Plea for media clippings

Surf Life Saving is compiling a digital library of stinger articles, and would appreciate help from anyone who may have newspaper or magazine clippings relating to stingers. We are seeking articles documenting stings of all types and severities. All will be returned after scanning.

For further input or information, contact the SLSQ Marine Stinger Coordinator, Dr. Lisa-ann Gershwin on 0409 627 869.



What's coming in future issues?

In upcoming issues, we will look at topics including:

- How does protective clothing work to prevent stings?
- Which protective clothing is best?
- Why does vinegar work?
- What resources are available for marine stinger management?
- Why are people afraid of Irukandjis?

Did you know...

Treatment of stings has not changed.....

There were some confusing reports earlier this year that led many people to believe that the treatment for box jellyfish and Irukandji stings has changed from vinegar to hot water – this is erroneous and potentially unsafe. Fresh water will cause stinging cells to fire.

It is of urgent necessity to treat box jellyfish and Irukandji stings with vinegar to inactivate stinging cells from injecting more venom into the skin, whether tentacles are visible or not. In regions where Irukandjis may occur, it is important to treat stings of unknown origin (i.e., those that may be Irukandji) with vinegar to reduce the potential of further envenomation.

In the early stages, Irukandji stings may feel like sea lice, hair jellies, or blue bottles, prior to the onset of systemic symptoms within about 5-40 minutes of the sting.

Where to get more information

Emergency sting information	000
Reports of stings or specimens	24/7: 0409 627 869
General safety information	SLSQ (07) 3846 8000
General jellyfish information	SLSQ (07) 3846 8000
Media enquiries	SLSQ (07) 3846 8044
Signage enquiries	SLSQ (07) 3846 8020
Requests for brochures, posters, etc	SLSQ (07) 3846 8000
Requests for speaking engagements	Coord. 0409 627 869
Research info or project ideas	Coord. 0409 627 869
Contributions to newsletter	lisa.gershwin@jcu.edu.au
Add to mailing list	lisa.gershwin@jcu.edu.au

<http://www.reef.crc.org.au/publications/brochures/Moreinformation.htm>

<http://www.marinestingers.com.au/marinestingers/default.htm>

Marine Stinger Management Newsletter copyright Surf Life Saving Queensland 2006

If stung

by Irukandji / box jellyfish:

1. Call for help (dial '000' or send someone for a lifeguard)
2. Treat the victim (Provide emergency care - CPR if necessary)
3. Treat the sting (flood with vinegar)
4. Seek medical assistance