



## Hawaii Records 17 Cases of Rat Lungworm Disease This Year

**Hawaii officials are grappling with how to control rats, snails and slugs that are known to carry roundworm parasites that can cause significant harm to people.**

Oct. 8, 2017, at 4:12 p.m.

HONOLULU (AP) — Hawaii officials are grappling with how to control rats, snails and slugs that are known to carry roundworm parasites, which can cause significant harm to people.

The state Department of Health has recorded 17 cases of rat lungworm disease this year, with the latest found in an infant last month, the Honolulu Star-Advertiser reported(<http://bit.ly/2y8PxLe>) on Sunday.

On the island of Oahu, the first case of the disease in seven years was found in Nick Booth, 29. Booth became sick in early July, and doctors weren't able to figure out what was wrong until weeks later.

Booth, who worked on a lettuce farm, said he was sent home from the emergency room at least three times before he was admitted into the hospital. He experienced painful knots in his stomach, intense headaches and a severe burning sensation throughout his limbs, he said.

"They sent me away with nothing, really. A couple days later it was just unbearable," Booth said. "You can feel them crawling through you. . Especially once it got into my brain. I could feel it progress. That was pretty horrible. I don't wish my worst enemy that."

Booth had somehow ingested the parasites, and he was later given anti-parasitic medicines. Health Department officials said they do not promote anti-parasitic drugs because they are not proven effective for treating rat lungworm disease and could worsen symptoms.

"It was already into my brain and pretty much all around it by the time they gave me anti-parasitics," Booth said. "I should have had anti-parasitics as soon as I got ill when it was in my stomach. They'd be killed and flushed out. Instead I'm looking at possible permanent nerve damage."

John McHugh, administrator for the state Department of Agriculture's Plant Industry Division, said the main hosts for the parasites are rats, and the state does not have the resources to effectively control the rat population.