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Coroner warns of dangers of consuming wild mushrooms

The death of a Bayswater woman after she and her son were poisoned by a homemade meal has prompted Victorian State Coroner, Judge John Cain, to call for improved public awareness about the dangers of consuming wild mushrooms.

On 22 May 2024, Loreta Maria Del Rossi, 98, passed away at Eastern Health Wantirna, seven days after having consumed a meal made with mushrooms foraged from her own garden.

In the finding, released today for the first time, Judge Cain found that Mrs Del Rossi died from multi-organ failure due to poisoning from amatoxins — the toxin found in lethal ‘death cap’ mushrooms.

Mrs Del Rossi, who lived with her adult son, grew her own vegetables and regularly collected wild edible grasses such as dandelion and milk thistle.

In April 2024, Mrs Del Rossi located a patch of wild mushrooms growing in her front yard and advised her son that she would collect, clean and test them. They then consumed the mushrooms and did not experience any negative effects.

On 15 May 2024, Mrs Del Rossi found more mushrooms growing in the same patch of yard and prepared them for dinner as she had done the month prior. That night Mrs Del Rossi and her son fell ill and, following a call to 000, were transported to hospital for treatment.

While Mrs Del Rossi’s son survived, her condition deteriorated and she entered palliative care on 20 May 2024.

Wild mushrooms typically grow in autumn in Victoria, as the weather becomes wetter and cooler. The death cap mushroom, which contains amatoxins, is usually whitish, yellow, pale brown or green in colour and often grows under oak trees. The estimated lethal dose of amatoxins in humans is 0.1 mg/kg. As such, a 50g mushroom may contain a potentially fatal quantity of anatoxins for a 70kg adult.

In the finding, Judge Cain also highlighted another common dangerous mushroom variety in Victoria, the yellow-staining mushroom. While this type of mushroom was not suspected to be involved in Mrs Del Rossi’s death, it is often confused for edible mushrooms that can be purchased in supermarkets and is the most commonly eaten poisonous mushroom in Victoria.

Having investigated Mrs Del Rossi’s death, Judge Cain noted that the Victorian Department of Health produces a variety of resources about the dangers of foraging wild mushrooms, picking and consuming death cap and yellow-staining mushrooms, how to identify and remove the deadly fungi and instructions for suspected poisoning.

“I commend the Department of Health for publishing a health advisory regarding the consumption of wild mushrooms,” said His Honour. “However, I believe that additional public awareness is merited.”

To improve public health and safety and reduce further similar deaths, Judge Cain has recommended that the Department of Health, in conjunction with the Victorian Poisons Information Centre, design and run an annual advertising campaign that can be released each autumn, to warn Victorians about the dangers of consuming wild mushrooms.

A copy of the finding can be accessed here: [Finding into the death of Loreta Maria Del Rossi](#)

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