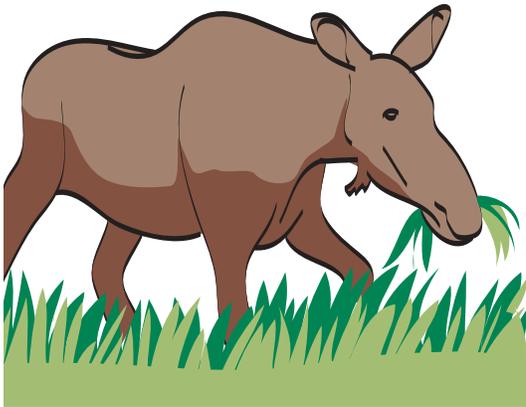




NORTHWEST TERRITORIES CONTAMINANTS FACT SHEETS

Moose



For thousands of years, Aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories have relied on the moose as an important traditional food. Moose are an important part of their health, culture and economy. Now, people in the Northwest Territories are becoming more aware of contaminants in the environment.

This fact sheet will describe what types of contaminants are in moose, how they get there, and what this means to the health of people who eat them.

Moose, like many other land-based animals, are less likely to build up elevated levels of contaminants compared to marine animals.

Since moose are plant eaters they are low on the food chain. Contaminants become more concentrated when animals (predators) eat other animals (prey). This process is called biomagnification. Since moose do not eat other animals, this helps them avoid building up elevated levels of contaminants.

Contaminant levels in an animal can slowly build up over time, if the animal continues to eat foods with contaminants. This is called bioaccumulation. Generally, the younger the moose, the lower the contaminant levels.

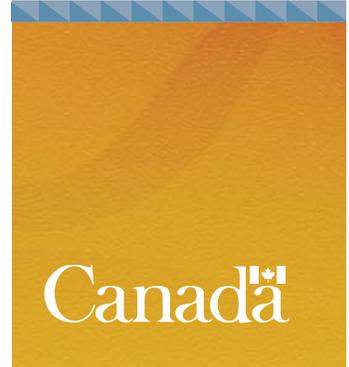
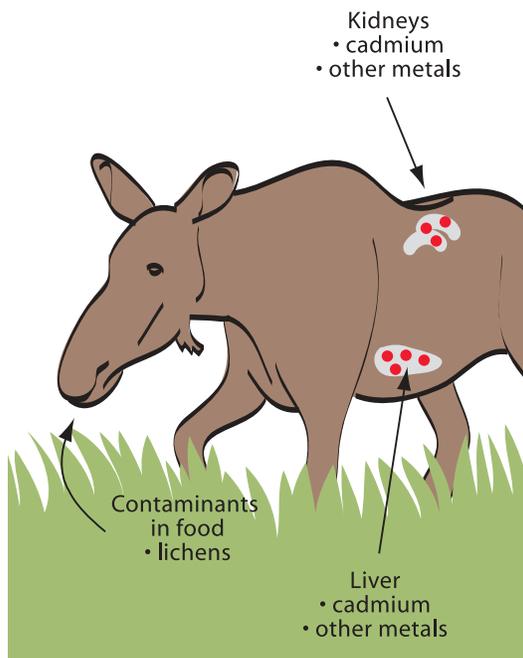
Contaminants are grouped into major types which build up in the fat or in the organs of animals.

Contaminants such as persistent organic pollutants (POPs) build up in fat. (See POPs fact sheet.) They are low in lean land animals such as moose.

Contaminants, such as heavy metals (see heavy metals fact sheet) and radionuclides (see radionuclides fact sheet), can build up in organs of certain land animals. This is because the organs act as filters for the body.

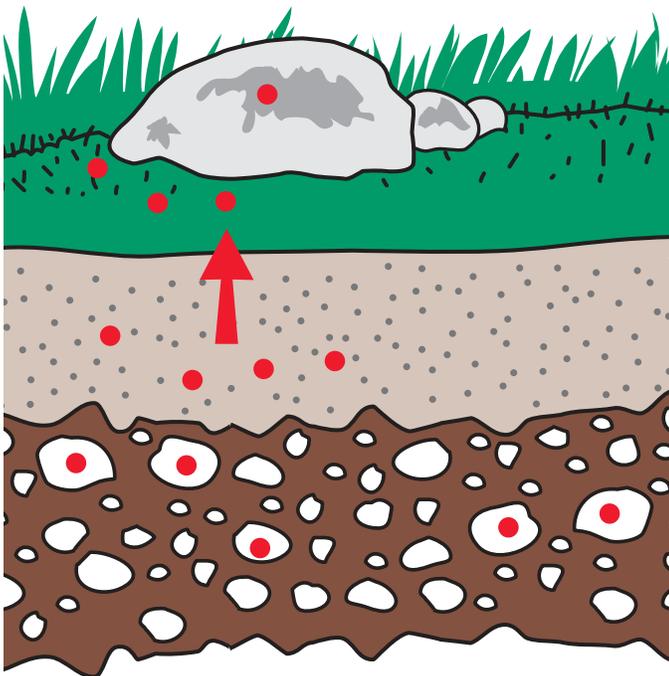
Contaminant levels have been measured in moose because they are an important traditional food. Studies have found that most contaminants are present at such low levels that they are not considered health risks to moose or to the people who eat them.

The only contaminant found in slightly higher levels was the heavy metal cadmium, which concentrates in the kidneys and liver.



Cadmium in moose comes from the plants they eat.

Cadmium is naturally present in the Northwest Territories, through the weathering of rocks. But it can also come from human activities such as burning fuel and garbage or from industrial sources through air currents. The grasses and sedges that moose eat can absorb cadmium from the water or soil around them. Grasses and sedges die and grow back every year so they do not build up elevated levels of cadmium. Since a moose spends many years eating plants, cadmium can build up in its organs, although at very low levels.



● Contaminants

Moose is safe to eat!

Concentrations of cadmium found in moose are very low. Since it does not build up in meat, you can eat as much moose meat as you want without worrying about contaminants.

There have never been any health advisories on eating moose kidneys or livers in the Northwest Territories, because of the low levels of cadmium found.

Good News...



Moose is one of the healthiest foods available!

All living things, including moose contain some contaminants, but they are still extremely healthy and nutritious.

- The fat content of moose meat is very low compared to most store bought meat.
- Moose meat is an excellent source of protein and a good source of iron and B vitamins.
- Moose liver is high in nutrients such as iron and vitamin A.

Moose is a delicious and affordable food that is good for you in many ways. Eating it helps keep people connected to the land and their cultures. Hunting for moose helps keep people fit and healthy too.

Did you know...

Smokers are exposed to 20 to 30 times more cadmium than non-smokers! Smokers could consider quitting smoking, rather than avoid eating moose organs, to lower their risk of cadmium exposure.

For more information please contact:

Contaminants Division
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development
(867) 669-2699
Box 1500,
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2R3