



# MUSKOX

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – CONTAMINANTS FACT SHEETS



### WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT MUSKOX?

Muskoxen are land-based animals. Land-based animals are less likely to build up high levels of contaminants than marine animals (like beluga or ringed seal). Muskoxen eat plants and are lower on the food chain. Animals that do not eat other animals also tend to have low levels of contaminants.

Older muskoxen may have higher levels of contaminants in their organs due to a process called bioaccumulation (see *Contaminants Overview fact sheet* – <http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca>).

Muskox organs have been sampled for contaminants in the NWT (Banks Island and Victoria Island). The only contaminant found in slightly higher levels was cadmium in kidneys (see *Cadmium fact sheet* – <http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca>). Cadmium is absorbed by plants that muskoxen eat, but it does not build up to high levels in the meat. To minimize exposure to cadmium, it is much more effective to quit smoking or to avoid second hand smoke.

### MUSKOX IS GOOD FOR US!

Muskox meat is an excellent source of protein, iron and B vitamins. Protein is needed to build and repair all parts of the body, iron is used to make healthy blood, and B vitamins help the body use energy from foods.

Muskox fat is a good source of vitamin D. When sunshine hits your skin, your body can make its own vitamin D but in the winter when the sunshine is limited, it is important to eat foods that provide this vitamin for us. Vitamin D helps keep bones healthy and strong.

### IS MUSKOX SAFE TO EAT?

Yes! Muskox is safe to eat. It is also one of the healthiest foods available. The benefits of consuming muskox are much greater than the risks of contaminant exposure. Unless a person is consuming muskox kidney regularly on a weekly basis, there is no concern for consuming muskox kidney.