



# MUSKRAT

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – CONTAMINANTS FACT SHEETS



### WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT CONTAMINANTS IN MUSKRAT?

Muskrats are large rodents that are found throughout the NWT, especially in areas with rich aquatic vegetation.

Muskrats spend some time in the water but are mainly land-based animals. Land-based animals are less likely to build up high levels of contaminants than marine animals (like beluga or ringed seal).

Muskrats primarily eat plants and are low on the food chain. Animals that do not eat other animals tend to have low levels of contaminants. Occasionally, muskrats will eat

small animals such as frogs, snails, insects and small fish, but their main food source is plants. As well, muskrats usually only live for a few years (1-4 years). Animals that do not live very long usually do not have time to build up high levels of contaminants.

Muskrats have been sampled for contaminants in the NWT and have been shown to have low levels of contaminants.

### MUSKRAT IS GOOD FOR US!

Muskrat meat is an excellent source of iron and protein. Iron is used to make healthy blood. Protein is needed to build and repair all parts of the body.

Muskrat meat also provides us with B vitamins. These vitamins help our bodies use energy from foods.

For more nutritional information on muskrat, see the GNWT Health and Social Services Nutritional Food Fact Sheets Series (<http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca>).

### IS MUSKRAT SAFE TO EAT?

Yes! Muskrat is safe to eat. It is also one of the healthiest foods available. The benefits of consuming muskrat are much greater than the risks of contaminant exposure.

A consumption notice has never been issued by the NWT's Chief Public Health Officer to limit the intake of muskrat.