



PTARMIGAN & GROUSE

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – CONTAMINANTS FACT SHEETS



WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT PTARMIGAN AND GROUSE?

Ptarmigan and grouse, also known as “chickens”, are birds that can be found year round in the Northwest Territories (NWT). They eat plants and insects and are low on the food chain and so they tend to have low levels of contaminants.

Ptarmigan and grouse have been sampled for contaminants in the NWT. Contaminants are present at such low levels

that it is not considered a health risk to consume them. The only contaminant found in slightly higher levels was a heavy metal called cadmium, which can concentrate in the kidney of ptarmigan.

PTARMIGAN AND GROUSE ARE GOOD FOR US!

Ptarmigan and grouse meat are both excellent sources of protein. Protein is needed to build and repair all parts of the body.

Ptarmigan meat is a source of very high levels of iron. Iron is needed to make healthy blood. Grouse meat is also a good source.

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

ARE PTARMIGAN AND GROUSE SAFE TO EAT?

Yes! Ptarmigan and grouse are safe to eat. They are also some of the healthiest foods available. The benefits of consuming traditional foods 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 ptarmigan and grouse. Ptarmigan and grouse can be eaten freely without worry.

Exposure to a heavy metal called lead (*see Lead fact sheet* – <http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca>) may be elevated in traditional foods caught using lead shot, especially if the animal is not cleaned carefully soon after it is shot. It is safer to use steel, bismuth or iron shot to hunt. In the Northwest Territories, non-toxic shot (not containing lead) must be used to hunt migratory game birds. In Canada’s National Wildlife Areas, lead shot is prohibited for all hunting, including migratory birds and upland game birds.