



Wild Game

1. Have wild game animals been tested for arsenic in the Yellowknife, Ndilo and Dettah area?

As part of a human health and ecological risk assessment¹, a voluntary country foods study was initiated whereby people in the communities around Yellowknife donated their country foods for analyses. As part of that program 53 wild game samples were collected within a 50 km radius from the Giant Mine. Samples were collected for beaver, muskrat, hare, moose, black bear, ptarmigan, mallard duck, lesser scaup, white winged scoter, black duck, and spruce grouse. Organ samples were also provided.

The arsenic concentrations in the beaver and muskrat samples were similar to background concentrations. The arsenic concentrations in ducks (mallard duck, lesser scaup, white winged scoter and black duck) were about two times higher than background and the arsenic concentrations in moose were about three times higher than background. For small animals such as rabbits and spruce grouse the arsenic concentrations were about 4 to 5 times higher than background.

2. Is it safe to eat wild game harvested from the Yellowknife, Ndilo and Dettah area?

The risk assessment looked at scenarios for people who eat either a typical country food diet, a high country food diet, or who eat mostly supermarket foods. The risk assessment found that there was very little difference in the arsenic cancer risks between the people eating a country food diet and those eating a supermarket foods diet over the course of a lifetime. The risk assessment showed that eating country foods was not a dominating factor for exposure to arsenic. The benefits of consuming country foods are high and the risks from arsenic exposure are low, so we recommend that people continue to enjoy country foods in the area.

KEY MESSAGES

- Various wild game species have been tested for arsenic in the Yellowknife, Ndilo and Dettah area.
- A risk assessment concluded that there is very little difference in the cancer risks from arsenic exposure between people who eat country foods and those who eat supermarket foods.
- The benefits of consuming country foods are high and the risks from arsenic exposure are low. We recommend that people continue to enjoy country foods in the area.

1 – Canada North Environmental Services. (2018). Giant Mine Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment, Final Report. Prepared for: Public Services and Procurement Canada – Western Region, Project No. 2385.