



Lead in Wild Game

In 2008, CDC tested lead levels in the blood of 738 people and found that eating meat harvested with lead was associated with an increase in blood lead levels. Lead in venison has been documented in the Great Lakes region. Two small studies looked at ground venison in Wisconsin (WI) and Michigan (MI). In WI, lead was found in 15% of venison from meat processors and 8% in hunter processed venison. In MI, 30% contained lead fragments, all were from meat processors. Consider using non-toxic ammunition or talk with your processor about their process for reducing lead in ground venison.



PROTECTING WILDLIFE



Lead fragments from ammunition can also be found in the animal remains after field dressing. These can be eaten by animals, such as the bald eagle, and have been known to cause lead poisoning in birds.

References:

¹Centers for Disease Control. *Blood Lead Levels in Children. July 30, 2019.* <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/blood-lead-levels.htm>

²Department of Health and Human Services, Agency of Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. *Health Consultation: The Potential for Ingestion Exposure to Lead Fragments in Venison in Wisconsin. November 4th, 2008.*

³U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Agency of Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. *Health Consultation: The Potential for Ingestion Exposure to Lead Fragments in Venison in Michigan.*

Bullet Photo Credit: The National Park Service

X-Ray Photo Credit: NY Department of Environmental Conservation

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Lead Contamination



Keep Lead **Out** of
Our Traditionally
Harvested Foods!



LEAD

Lead is a heavy metal that is commonly used in gun ammunition and occasionally in solder used to repair maple syrup equipment. Lead exposure in children can cause lifelong impacts, such as brain and kidney damage, violent outbursts, and learning problems. In adults, health implications such as decreased mental function, anemia, high blood pressure, male infertility, and miscarriages can occur.

TIPS TO LOWER RISK:

🌸 HARVESTER INFORMATION 🌸

Choose Lead Free Ammunition. Lead bullets easily fragment when they hit a target, sending small and microscopic lead fragments far away from the point of entry or exit. This makes it nearly impossible to remove all the lead before consuming. Lead free ammunition such as copper produces a “mushroom” shape but otherwise retains its structure. See photo in previous panel to see the differences between lead and lead free.

Choose Pellet Size Larger Than Size 6 for Turkey Hunting. A recent study indicated that smaller pellet sizes, namely size 8 & 6, are more likely to leave lead in the breast meat.



🌸 PROCESSOR INFORMATION 🌸

Inspect Equipment for Lead. Food surfaces containing lead can contaminate maple sap and other foods when they come into contact. Old maple buckets patched with lead solder are a prime example.

Clean Grinders Often. Lead free meat should be ground before meat harvested with lead bullets. When grinding meat shot with lead, clean the grinder between carcasses to prevent higher lead concentrations mixing into meat with lower lead concentrations.



Photograph shows lead bullet fragments scattered throughout a deer's ribcage.