

DOES EATING GAME TAKEN WITH TRADITIONAL AMMUNITION POSE A HEALTH RISK?

We all know that hunters have been using traditional ammunition with lead components for hundreds of years. It is a staple in every hunter's pickup truck and cabin. Game harvested with such ammunition has been safely consumed by humans for hundreds of years and is a source of healthy, low-fat food. Naturally, hunters would be concerned about any claim that game harvested with traditional ammunition posed a health risk, even when the claim is unwarranted. A Centers for Disease Control (CDC) study of blood lead levels in North Dakota hunters validates what hunters have always known: consuming game harvested with traditional ammunition containing lead does not pose a human health risk.

The baseless claim that caused concern about consuming venison harvested with lead ammunition was born out of the anti-hunting movement. The story started when a dermatologist with ties to the Peregrine Fund — an organization dedicated to eliminating the use of lead ammunition for hunting -- claimed to have collected packages of venison from food banks that contained lead fragments. Out of fear and an overabundance of caution, North Dakota health officials (who never conducted their own study) accepted the dermatologist's findings and ordered all food banks to discard their venison.

The CDC study was prompted because of the unscientific "study" conducted by the dermatologist,

It's important that all hunters and their families know this and other key facts from the study:

- The average lead level of the hunters tested was actually lower than the blood lead level of the average American, including non-hunters.
- The average lead level of children in the study was only .88 micrograms per deciliter of blood; the CDC's level of concern for lead in children is 10 — more than 10 times the amount found!
- The difference between participants who ate wild game harvested with traditional ammunition and non-hunters was only .3 micrograms — a clinically insignificant number.

to determine if hunting with lead ammunition caused a health risk in humans.

If the unscientific allegations of an individual who serves on the board of directors of a politically driven group intent on banning lead ammunition could start all this, you can be assured that other anti-hunting organizations will try to manipulate the data from the CDC study and scare people into thinking it is unsafe to eat game taken with traditional ammunition. To our point, the Humane Society of the United States, an anti-hunting group and not the organization that runs your local animal shelter, came out in favor of banning all lead ammunition. This is as unsurprising as it is baseless.

Common sense and the CDC science-based study demonstrate that this issue is not about ammunition. It's about banning hunting. We believe strongly that hunters should take this opportunity to educate other hunters about

the CDC study and the facts about consuming game harvested with traditional ammunition, with a reminder to properly field dress and butcher their game. Regardless of the findings of any study, it is always a good idea to remove and properly discard all shot-damaged meat before processing or cooking.

Hunters should also point out the CDC study to local food pantries and organizations that feed the homeless with meat generously donated by hunters so that this valuable food source for needy persons is not wasted out of an overabundance of caution, misinformation or baseless fears.

If you know a hunter or anyone who enjoys the pleasure of a venison meal, we urge you to forward this information to them in the spirit of spreading accurate information about eating venison taken with traditional ammunition.

