

Lead Information for Hunters, Consumers and Meat Processors

Hunters

- Lead particles found in hunter-harvested venison have not been linked to any illnesses.
- Lead is a neurotoxin but toxicity depends on the level and frequency of exposure. It is particularly harmful to children 6 and younger and pregnant women.
- Lead can have physiological effects on human bodies and brains at levels below that which would cause any noticeable signs of sickness.
- The following guidelines and suggestions can eliminate or reduce and minimize the potential risk of consuming lead fragments, depending on the risk tolerance of the hunter.
- Consider alternatives to ammunition that is prone to fragment – these alternatives could include non-lead (copper) or other high-weight retention ammunition.
- Lead particles in venison will likely be too small to detect by sight, feel, or when chewing the meat.
- If you process your own meat, do not use deer with excessive shot damage. Trim a generous distance away from the wound channel and discard any meat that is bruised, discolored or contains hair, dirt, bone fragments or grass.
- Practice clean field handling techniques. Dress, thoroughly rinse, and keep the carcass cool.
- Practice marksmanship and outdoors skills to get cleaner, closer shots and better shots. For example, additional shots may be needed if shooting at a moving target.

Consumers

- Venison is a high-protein meat that has nutritional benefits. Venison donation programs are an excellent source of protein for needy families.
- Hunter-harvested deer may contain lead particles.
- Lead particles found in hunter-harvested venison have not been linked to any illnesses.
- Lead is a neurotoxin but toxicity depends on the level and frequency of exposure. It is particularly harmful to children 6 and younger and pregnant women.
- If there is any concern, children 6 and younger and pregnant women should not consume venison.
- Lead can have physiological effects on human bodies and brains at levels below that which would cause any noticeable signs of sickness.
- Initial tests indicate that ground meat has a higher tendency to contain lead particles. Lead fragments are rare in whole muscle-cuts.
- Provide recipes for those not familiar with preparing whole muscle-cuts.
- Consider avoiding vinegar and other acidic substances when preparing venison. Acids can make any lead more soluble and more easily absorbed in the body.
- Venison donation programs are tools that help wildlife officials manage wild deer herds.

Key Messages by Audience, continued

Meat Processors

- There is a high likelihood that any deer shot with a firearm using lead ammunition will contain lead particles.
- Use care when selecting meat for grinding. Do not use deer with excessive shot damage. Trim a generous distance away from the bullet wound channel and discard any meat that is bruised, discolored or contains hair, dirt, bone fragments or grass.
- Lead is a neurotoxin but toxicity depends on the level and frequency of exposure. It is particularly harmful to children 6 and younger and pregnant women. Care should be taken to minimize any contamination.
- Lead can have physiological effects on human bodies and brains at levels below that which would cause any noticeable signs of sickness.
- Most lead particles in venison are too small to be seen or felt.
- Periodically check grinders for lead fragments.
- Minimize batching of multiple deer to avoid cross-contamination.

