DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH

Fishing in Katherine

PFAS in wild caught fish and crustaceans

The Northern Territory Department of Health is releasing precautionary dietary advice for frequent consumption of wild caught fish and crustaceans from the Katherine River and Tindal Creek.

Following studies undertaken by the Department of Defence and Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), a number of species caught in the Katherine Region have been found to contain small amounts of PFAS.

It is still safe to eat wild caught fish from the Daly River and outer waterways and advice provided to the public is precautionary and relates to limiting consumption from Katherine River between Donkey Camp Weir and Daly River. Due to the closeness in proximity to RAAF Base Tindal, it is recommended people avoid consuming fish caught in Tindal Creek.

A poster has been developed to help people understand the fish dietary recommendations, which illustrates portion sizes and dietary advice. To view, visit www.nt.gov.au and search PFAS.

Recommended fish consumption for affected areas in the Katherine region:

Fish species	Adults	Young children (2 – 6 years)
Barramundi, sleepy cod, sooty grunter	2 serves / week *150g serve*	1 serve / week *75g serve*
	OR	*OR*
Bream, catfish, archerfish	1 serve / week *150g serve*	2 serves / month *75g serve*
	OR	*OR*
Mullet, Tarpon, butlers grunter	1 serve / month *150g serve*	Avoid
	OR	*OR*
Cherabin	2 serves / week *100g serve, about ¾ cup, about 5 cherabin*	1 serve / week *50g serve, about 1/2 cup, about 3 cherabin*
	OR	*OR*
Fish livers *Barramundi, sleepy cod, sooty grunter, Bream, catfish, archerfish*	6 liver pieces per week *10g per serve, about 1 teaspoon*	Avoid
	OR	*OR*
Fish livers *Tarpon, mullet, butler's grunter*	2 liver pieces per week *10g per serve, about 1 teaspoon*	Avoid

For more information on recommended consumption and to view the full FSANZ reports, visit the NT EPA website at www.ntepa.nt.gov.au/waste-pollution/compliance/pfas-investigation

What are PFAS?

PFAS are manufactured chemicals used in products that resist heat, oil, stains and water. These chemicals are used throughout the world and are found in many common household products such as shampoo, non-stick cookware, paints and pesticides. Firefighting foams typically contain PFAS due to their historical effectiveness in fighting liquid fuel fires. PFAS chemicals have been identified as emerging contaminants, and because they do not breakdown in the environment they have the potential to bio-accumulate in plants, animals and people.

How does PFAS affect my health?

According to leading Australian authorities, there is currently no consistent evidence of human health effects related to PFAS exposure; however, the possibility cannot be excluded.

The potential health risk of PFAS increases if wild caught aquatic species from contaminated areas are frequently consumed over a long period of time.

The risk to tourists and visitors who may occasionally eat fish from the affected area of a river or creek is considered to be very low.

Current Katherine sites containing PFAS

There are concerns related to frequent consumption of wild caught aquatic species from:

- Katherine River (between Donkey Camp Weir and Daly River)
- Tindal Creek

How did PFAS get into the Katherine River?

Firefighting foams containing PFAS used during training exercises leached into groundwater and through water run-off via drains into the Tindal Creek and into the Katherine River.

Who is most at risk of consuming PFAS?

Local fishers, anglers and Aboriginal people who consume aquatic species from affected areas frequently and over a long period of time are most at risk of being affected by PFAS. Although there is inconclusive evidence on any health effects to humans, it is advised that exposure be limited as a precaution.

Does the consumption recommendation extend to bush foods, flora and fauna?

The Department of Defence has extended their study to include bushfoods and flora and fauna. Testing indicates there is low exposure risks when consuming fruits and land animals (i.e. billy goat plums and wallaby). Consumption of plants and animals from affected waterways (i.e. turtles, crocodiles, turtle eggs and ducks) are still safe for eating when balanced with other food sources. General frequency advice is given in the bush tucker brochure developed to help people understand the relative exposure, which illustrates dietary advice. To view, visit www.nt.gov.au and search PFAS.

Questions?

If you have questions relating to food consumption and PFAS please contact 1800 095 646 or email envirohealth@nt.gov.au for more information.