



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
May 13, 2008

For More Information, Contact:
Loreeta Canton
Stacy Eberl
Office of Public Information
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.2372
E-mail: lcanton@nd.gov
sleberl@nd.gov

State Health Department and CDC Seek Participants for Study Measuring Blood Lead Levels Connected With Consumption of Wild Game

BISMARCK, N.D. – The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the North Dakota Department of Health are seeking participants for a study measuring the risk, if any, of consuming wild game harvested with lead bullets, according to Dr. Stephen Pickard, epidemiologist with the Department of Health.

The study, which will begin May 16, 2008, will test the blood lead levels of 680 people of all ages. The study will compare blood lead levels of people who eat venison with the lead levels of those who don't. All people are encouraged to participate, whether they eat wild game or not.

Earlier this year, a local doctor contacted the Department of Health about the discovery of metal fragments in ground venison donated for food pantries across the state. Laboratory testing identified the metal as lead. Because of the potential risk the lead fragments posed to human health, the North Dakota departments of Health, Agriculture, and Game and Fish advised food banks to discard any remaining donated venison. In April 2008, the officials in Minnesota made a similar advisory after laboratory tests discovered lead in venison that had been donated to food pantries in Minnesota. The upcoming study in North Dakota will attempt to determine whether eating wild game harvested with lead bullets results in increased blood lead levels.

“This study is an important opportunity to help us understand whether swallowing lead bullet fragments causes increased levels of lead in the blood,” said State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D. “We’re hopeful that the study will give us information on which we can base any future recommendations.”

-- more --

600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@nd.gov

Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

The study will be conducted at the sites listed in the chart at the end of this news release. Participants are asked to visit a site in their area on one of the days listed. Researchers from the CDC and the Department of Health will interview each participant for about 10 minutes and then draw blood to test for lead levels. The testing will be done free of charge, and each person who participates will receive his or her test results in the mail. Complete analysis of the data and blood specimens collected will require several months; however, it is anticipated that preliminary results, as well as the lead levels, will be available before the fall hunting season.

“Some hunters have questions about the lead in venison issue,” said Terry Steinwand, director of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department. “I encourage hunters and their families to participate in this study so that we can have more answers for them about the potential effects of consuming wild game harvested with lead bullets.”

Lead is a soft, grey metal that is used in most bullets manufactured today. Upon entering an animal, some scattering of lead fragments occurs. If eaten, some of the ingested lead will be absorbed; however, it is not known if enough lead from bullet fragments is absorbed to raise the blood lead level. Other sources of lead in the environment, including lead paint and lead used in some industries, are known to raise blood lead levels and must be accounted for in the study.

There is no safe level of lead in blood. A blood lead level higher than 10 micrograms per deciliter is consider elevated; however, even levels below 10 can cause health problems, including high blood pressure and reduced kidney function among adults and permanent brain injury among infants and pre-school children.

No appointments will be taken. People willing to participate in the study can show up without an appointment at one of the sites listed in the following charts. The testing will end once 680 participants have been tested. **Please note: The testing sites will not be open on the weekends or on Memorial Day.**

More information is available on the Department of Health website at www.ndhealth.gov. Anyone with questions about the study may call the North Dakota Department of Health at 701.328.2372. For more information, the media may contact Loreeta Canton or Stacy Eberl, Office of Public Information, at 701.328.2372.

-- more --

Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health	500 E. Front Ave. Bismarck, N.D. 58506	Fri., May 16 and Mon., May 19 through Fri., May 23	8 a.m. – 12 p.m. 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.
Central Valley Health District	122 2 nd St. N.W. Jamestown, N.D. 58401	Fri., May 16 and Mon., May 19 through Fri., May 23	8 a.m. – 12 p.m. 1 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Grand Forks Public Health Department	151 S. 4 th St. Suite N301 Grand Forks, N.D. 58201	Fri., May 16 and Mon., May 19 through Thurs., May 22	8 a.m. – 12 p.m. 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.
Fargo Cass Public Health	401 3 rd Ave. N. Fargo, N.D. 58102	Fri., May 23 and Tues., May 27 through Fri., May 30	8 a.m. – 12 p.m. 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.
First District Health Unit	801 11 th Ave. S.W. Minot, N.D. 58702	Tues., May 27 through Fri., May 30	8 a.m. – 12 p.m. 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.
Southwestern District Health Unit	2893 3 rd Ave. W. Dickinson, N.D. 58601	Tues., May 27; Thurs., May 29; Fri., May 30	8 a.m. – 12 p.m. 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.

-- 30 --

Please note: To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at www.nddohpressroom.gov.

600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@nd.gov

Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.