

Bush foods in Katherine

PFAS in bush tucker

The Northern Territory Department of Health is releasing initial precautionary dietary advice for frequent consumption of bush food near the Katherine River and Tindal Creek because of the environmental presence of per-and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

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

While it is safe to eat varying amounts of these bush foods, this initial information is provided to the public as precautionary dietary advice and relates to limiting consumption from and near the Katherine River between Donkey Camp Weir and Daly River and the Tindal Creek.

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

If you are concerned about your PFAS exposure, please contact your local health clinic.

Recommended fish consumption for affected areas in the Katherine region:

	Consumption frequency
Land animals and migratory birds Examples: wallaby, kangaroo, magpie goose	Every Day
Fruits Examples: billy goat plum, pandanus	Regularly
Birds, reptiles and stems and leaves of plants in or near water Examples: turtle, file snake, goanna, duck, palm (leaves), waterlily (stem)	Weekly
Snake and reptile eggs Examples: keelback snake, children's python, turtle eggs, crocodile eggs	Occasionally
Eggs of water birds Examples: duck eggs, goose eggs, eggs of other waterfowl	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 is 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 shampoos, 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 from near the affected river or creek is considered to be very low.

Current Katherine sites containing PFAS

There are concerns related to frequent consumption of wild life and native fruit, vegetables and plants from near:

- 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?

People who consume wild life and native fruit, vegetable and plants from river beds of the 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 people, it is advised that exposure be limited as a precaution.

Questions?

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