

Fact sheet: Consumption advice for fish and game – Heart Morass Wetlands



Environment
Protection
Authority Victoria

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Fact sheet

Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) recommends that recreational fish and game hunters do not consume fish, eels or ducks caught at the Heart Morass Wetlands until further notice.

This precautionary advice has been issued following preliminary testing of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) levels in plants and animals undertaken by Department of Defence at its East Sale site.

What is the reason for this advice?

EPA has received preliminary results from Department of Defence testing on wildlife at both its East Sale site and the adjacent Heart Morass Wetlands that show elevated levels of PFAS in fish, eels and ducks.

EPA is working with the Department of Defence to finalise a detailed assessment of testing results before further advice can be issued.

This assessment is expected to be completed by late December 2017.

What is PFAS?

PFAS are a group of chemicals that include perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorohexane sulfonate (PFHxS).

As they have heat, water and stain repelling properties, PFAS have been widely used in a range of industrial and consumer products both in Australia and internationally, including in fire retardants, water proofing, food preparation, food packaging, furnishings, clothing and recreational equipment.

PFAS are a concern because they can persist for a long time, both in the environment and in humans.

What are the health effects of PFAS?

Food Standards Australia New Zealand and enHealth report there is no consistent evidence that PFAS are harmful to human health, including in highly exposed occupational populations.

However, since these chemicals remain in humans and the environment for many years, it is recommended that as a precaution human exposure to PFAS be minimised wherever possible.

Further information

Information regarding the health effects of PFAS and health-based guideline values for PFAS can be found here:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-pfas.htm>

For further details about this fact sheet, contact EPA on:

1300 372 842
(1300 EPA VIC)

For further details regarding the PFAS investigation at RAAF Base East Sale, Defence's project team can be contacted on:

1800 793 201
eastsale.defence@senserva.com.au

Information about the Department of Defence's national program to manage the impacts of PFAS on, and in the vicinity of, some of its bases around Australia can be found here: <http://www.defence.gov.au/Environment/PFAS/>



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I have been catching and eating fish and game from the Heart Morass Wetlands. Should I be concerned?

People who have eaten fish, eels and ducks are not considered to be at risk of any adverse health effects.

However, EPA recommends that to prevent exposure to PFAS, people do not consume anything caught from the Wetlands until further analysis of the results can be undertaken by Department of Defence.

With duck hunting season recently closed, there may be hunters with frozen ducks with high PFAS concentrations that should be disposed of.

Further background on Department of Defence testing for PFAS

Defence has commenced a national program to investigate and manage the impacts of PFAS on, and in the vicinity of, some of its bases around Australia.

Victorian sites currently under investigation include the RAAF Base East Sale, HMAS Cerberus and Bandiana Military Area.

RAAF Base East Sale has been a permanent flying training base since 1943 with a history of aqueous film forming foam use – a type of firefighting foams known to contain PFAS.

The site is located in close proximity to the Heart Morass Wetlands an area that is utilised for recreational purposes such as duck hunting and fishing.

RAAF Base East Sale has undergone a detailed on-site environmental investigation, with off-site investigations currently underway.