

Frequently Asked Questions on Serving Traditional Wild Game Meats in NWT Health and Social Services Facilities

Context:

Historically, a major barrier to serving traditional wild game meats in NWT health and social services facilities is the belief that only “federally inspected” meats may be served these facilities. This set of frequently asked questions with evidence-based answers is provided as a reference for decision-makers.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. What is the definition of traditional food in the NWT?

Answer¹: Traditional foods are defined as wildlife and plants that are gathered, hunted, fished, trapped, snared from the land, waters and sky over millennia by Indigenous peoples of the NWT. The traditional practices related to acquiring, preparing and eating traditional foods are deeply ingrained in the cultural identity of Indigenous people.

2. What is federally inspected meat?

Answer²:

- Federally inspected meat is defined as meat that comes from food establishments such as abattoirs, manufacturers and processors which are registered with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Examples of federally registered establishments include Sysco Canada, Campbell Soups, Sunrise Poultry and Maple Leaf Foods.
- Animals entering the food supply system in Canada must be slaughtered and processed at **either** provincially/territorial registered establishments or federally registered establishments.
- In Canada, federal and provincial governments play a role in meat inspection. Slaughter and processing facilities are inspected to verify that industry is following processes and practices that result in meat that is safe to eat. Inspectors also check for the presence of pesticides, drug residues, and disease in animals.
- The Food and Drugs Act is the main piece of federal legislation for food safety. It prohibits the sale of unsafe food products in Canada. All meat sold in Canada must comply with this legislation, regardless of where it is processed or sold.

3. Are there federally or territorially registered establishments from which to purchase NWT wild game meats?

Answer: No. Currently, there are no federally or territorial registered establishments in the NWT from which to purchase NWT wild game meats.

¹ By consensus from the Traditional Foods in Facilities Working Group, Department of Health and Social Services, Government of the NWT.

² Canadian Food Inspection Agency: <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/meat-and-poultry-products/manual-of-procedures/chapter-17/annex-g/eng/1433169076630/1433170816393#a23>

4. Can federally inspected wild game meats from licenced commercial suppliers outside the NWT be served in government-funded NWT health and social services facilities?

Answer: Yes. However, wild game meats such as bison, deer (venison), and elk harvested outside of the NWT would not comply with the definition of “traditional foods of the NWT” which describes wild game traditionally consumed by Indigenous people of the NWT.

5. Can government funded NWT health and social services facilities serve traditional wild game meat that has not been supplied by federally registered establishments?

Answer³: Yes.

- The Food Establishment Safety Regulations of the NWT Section 30(2) permit food establishments to handle NWT wild game and fish harvested by licenced hunters and fishers. This includes the processing and service of traditional food in facilities which hold a valid Food Establishment Permit.
- The NWT *Wildlife Act* and the *Wildlife General Regulations* (and other provisions) identify what harvesters can do with the wildlife that are lawfully harvested. Traditional wild game cannot be sold by any person to any sort of business or facility unless wild game meat was harvested under a commercial licence. However, the meat of wildlife may be donated or gifted.
- Any gifts of big game meat more than 5 kg must have a receipt that can be tracked. The receipt must show harvester’s name, signature, licence or identification number, the date the meat was gifted and the weight or portion of the meat.

6. Can government funded NWT health and social services facilities purchase NWT wild game meats and fish?

Answers:

- Yes for only wildlife harvested under a commercial licence may be purchased. No other NWT traditional wild game meats may be purchased.
- Licenced hunters, harvesters and outfitters may only donate (gift) wild game meat to NWT health and social services facilities. A receipt of the donation must be provided.⁴
- Yes for NWT fish. Fish may be purchased from NWT commercial fishers.

7. If government funded NWT health and social services facilities cannot purchase traditional wild game meats, can these facilities serve donated (gifts of) wild game meats?

Answer: Yes.

- The Food Establishment Safety Regulations of the NWT Section 30(2) permits food establishments to handle wild game meats and fish harvested by licenced hunters, outfitters and fishers. This includes the processing and service of traditional food in facilities which hold a valid Food Establishment Safety Permit.

³ Canadian Food Inspection Agency: <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/meat-and-poultry-products/manual-of-procedures/chapter-17/annex-g/eng/1433169076630/1433170816393#a23>

⁴ NWT Wildlife Act General Regulations

- Territorially-inspected butcher shops may cut and wrap wild game meats from licenced harvesters, who in turn, may donate the cut and wrapped meat to government funded NWT health and social services facilities.

8. Are commercial food suppliers or distributors such as Sysco Canada and Northbest Distributors the **only** permitted suppliers of wild game meats and fish for NWT hospitals and long term care facilities whose food services are managed by contracted food service companies?

Answer: No.

- Harvesters such as hunters, trappers, fishers, and outfitters are permitted to supply by donation traditional wild game meats and fish to anyone in the NWT.
- Gifts of (donated) NWT traditional wild game meats and fish which are lawfully harvested and processed are permitted for service in NWT hospitals and long term care facilities.

9. What permits, licences or other documents are required to serve donated wild game meats?

- Gifted or donated meat may be served without a permit. If the hospitals or other facilities intend to sell the meat then additional permits are required until the *Wildlife Act* and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources must be contacted.
- Hospitals or long term care facilities must hold a valid Food Establishment Safety Permit to serve any kind of food.

10. Do traditional wild game meats need to be stored in separate designated refrigerators and freezers?

Answer⁵: No

- Canada Food Inspection Agency Manual of Procedures for segregation of wild game meat products states that: “ A dressed carcass that is free of apparent defects may be stored together with meat products derived from a food animal if there is no contact, either direct or indirect, between the carcass and the meat products” and “meat products that are derived from a dressed carcass and that are packaged and bear a label indicating the name of the person from whom they were received and the species of game animal from which they are derived may be stored in the same room of a registered establishment where meat products from a food animal are stored.”
- There are no specific sections in the NWT Food Establishment Safety Regulations that address segregation and storage of wild game meats and fish.. Therefore, routine procedures outlined in the NWT Food Establishment Safety Regulations and regulations and procedures outlined by the Canada Food Inspection Agency would apply.

⁵ Canadian Food Inspection Agency <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/meat-and-poultry-products/manual-of-procedures/chapter-17/annex-g/eng/1433169076630/1433170816393>