

# Study confirms lead in venison, group says

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — An Idaho rap-tor group working to eliminate lead from ammunition released findings Tuesday it said shows that ground venison from 80 percent of deer killed with high-velocity lead bullets contains metal fragments.

The Peregrine Fund, based in Boise, and researchers from Washington State University in Pullman, Wash., say it is further evidence people who eat meat from game animals shot with lead bullets risk exposure to the toxic metal.

Separately, the North Dakota Health Department and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are planning a study on nearly 700 people who eat meat from wild game harvested with lead bullets, to determine health risks, if any.

The suggestion that lead bullets could make venison unsafe for humans has prompted outrage from pro-hunting groups such as Safari Club International, of Somerset, N.J., and the Connecticut-based National Shooting Sports Foundation, a firearms industry group, after North Dakota and Minnesota in March and April instructed food banks there to pull hunter-donated venison from their shelves.

"This is one more piece of evidence that points to lead bullets as a source of contamination in our environment," Rick

Watson, vice president of The Peregrine Fund, said in a statement ahead of a presentation of the study, which focused on 30 white-tailed deer killed by standard, lead-core, copper-jacketed bullets fired from a high-powered rifle.

The Peregrine Fund organized the four-day conference at Boise State University to bolster its stand against lead ammunition, with more than 50 scientific presentations on lead poisoning in wildlife and humans, including research on Inuits in Alaska and Russia who practice subsistence hunting.

The study released Tuesday comes after a Peregrine Fund board member, Dr. William Cornatzer, previously did CT scans of about 100 packets of venison that had been donated to food banks by hunters. He found 60 percent had multiple lead fragments.

Lawrence Keane, a National Shooting Sports Foundation spokesman, said he hasn't seen the latest study.

But he said initial evidence supplied by Cornatzer, a dermatologist and professor at the University of North Dakota medical school, didn't justify a policy change or destruction of venison.

Groups, including Safari Club, gave nearly 1 million pounds of venison in 2007 to food banks as part of their humanitarian efforts.