

Response provided to journalist
10 October 2017

Question

The Victorian Environment Protection Authority is warning people not to eat fish, eels and ducks taken from the Heart Morass Wetland because of PFAS levels detected there.

The information has come from defence, but there's some concern from Field and Game Australia that duck especially may carry the contamination elsewhere.

We'd like to know:

- Is defence planning to hold any community information sessions, as it did with previous testing discoveries?
- How many ducks were tested to determine that they may not be safe to eat?
- Is defence investigating PFAS contamination of ducks in other areas?

Response to all

On 28 September 2017, Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) recommended 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 was issued following preliminary testing by Defence near RAAF Base East Sale of per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) levels in plants and animals. Elevated levels of PFAS were detected in fish, eels and ducks. Samples were taken from 10 ducks.

Defence is currently conducting a Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment. This assessment is expected to be completed before the end of 2017 and will inform any further advice regarding precautionary measures. Defence is committed to keeping the community informed about the investigation findings and will hold a community information session once the assessments are finalised.

The type and quantity of sampling is different for each environmental investigation and is determined by several factors, including the hydrogeology of the investigation area. There are currently no other investigations in the PFAS Investigation and Management Program that have tested ducks.