







Guidelines for Hunter Support Program and the General Public

Summary

- COVID-19 is transmitted by people, not by food. Therefore, the risk of country food being contaminated with COVID-19 is low.
- Risk of wildlife contamination with COVID-19 is also very low, according to the current knowledge available.
- Precautions must be taken when butchering and sharing country food to prevent any contamination of the virus between people: wash hands often & keep a distance of 2 meters from others that are not from your household. It is encouraged to wear a non-medical mask or face covering when it is not possible to respect the safe distance of 2 meters with people that are not from your household.











Processing Country Food:

- Make sure to follow all these basic hygiene rules:
 - Wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling country food. Hand sanitizer is also effective against COVID-19 and can be used.
 - Gloves can become contaminated just like hands. If you wear them, wash your hands before and after using them and throw them away after each use.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands or gloves.
 - Keep a distance of 2 meters from others that are not from your household when cutting meat. It is strongly encouraged to wear a non-medical mask when it is not possible to respect the safe distance of 2 meters.
 - When processing country food outdoors, limit the number of people around the carcass to 25 people.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces with a household disinfectant. Read instructions for proper use. You can also use diluted bleach.
 - Recipe for homemade disinfectant: 4 teaspoons (20 ml) of domestic bleach in 1 L (4 cups) of water.
 Use a fresh mix of water and bleach every day.
- Clean butchering tools thoroughly between each use.

Country Food Distribution:

- Delivery to homes is the safest option for elderly and people at risk.
- Take additional precautions when people come to pick up country food:
 - If possible, put the country food in bags in advance and make sure to respect the distance of 2 meters when the person comes to pick it up.
 - When people are bringing their own bags, the pieces of country food should be dropped directly into the bag. It is encouraged to wear a non-medical mask or face covering when it is not possible to respect the safe distance of 2 meters.
 - People should stay outside of the house and the shack when they come to pick up country food.
 - Make sure to wash hands often with soap or hand sanitizer and clean high touch surfaces with disinfectant.
 - o Only one member per household should go pick up country food.
 - Anyone feeling sick should not pick up or distribute country food.













A person should not participate in processing and distributing country food to other community members if he/she:

- has any cold or flu-like symptoms such as sore throat, cough or fever, even if the symptoms are mild.
- has tested positive for COVID-19 and has not yet recovered.
- was in contact with a positive case and/or is waiting for a COVID-19 test result.
- is in self-isolation following a trip outside Nunavik.

Sharing country food between Nunavik communities:

People can continue to share country food between communities when the hygiene measures listed above are respected.

Wildlife & COVID-19

Many Inuit have shared their worries concerning the risk of COVID-19 transmission by geese migrating from the South, and more recently about the potential contamination of beluga and narwhals with the coronavirus.

There are still many unknowns about how the coronavirus can transmit from human to animals. In general, there appears to be a low risk of transmission from animals to humans. The situation is changing constantly and information will be sent to Nunavik hunters when it becomes available.

GEESE:

- There is little to no risk of COVID-19 being brought to the North by geese and thus little to no risk of transmission to Nunavimmiut by that vector.
- Studies speculate that the COVID-19 pandemic began with transmission from an unknown animal, but according to current data, transmission is now considered principally human to human.
- Bird coronaviruses are not known to infect humans and human coronaviruses are not known to infect birds. Currently, there is no risk of humans being infected by wild birds such as geese.
- A research team from Université Laval assessed the risk of COVID-19 propagation by snow geese. 500 geese were captured and tested during their migration in spring 2020. No COVID-19 virus was found in any of the geese tested.











MARINE MAMMALS:

- Beluga and narwhals have a genetic predisposition to COVID-19 according to some researchers, but this information alone is not enough to say that these species could catch the virus.
- Even if beluga and narwhal could catch the virus, the risk of human transmission of COVID-19 to marine mammals is extremely low according to Fisheries and Oceans Canada¹. It is unlikely that an infected person would be in close contact with a living beluga or narwhal. This is even more unlikely since the level of coronavirus infection in northern communities is extremely low.

Country food safety during the summer month - reminder

Botulism: Two to four (2-4) cases of botulism (qassuniq) occur each year in Nunavik. Constant cooling of sea mammal products is protective. Freezing products until Fall is recommended for safe igunag making.

Trichinellosis program: Walrus hunters should keep on testing ALL walrus tongues. A small number of walrus are infected. No case of human trichinellosis (parasite mostly affecting muscles) has been diagnosed in Nunavik in the last 20 years with walrus as a source. The merit of this is the result of hunters' commitment toward the testing program. No distribution of walrus meat should proceed before results are received.

¹ Informal email exchanges with DFO

