

Mercury Content of Oregon Groundfish



Revisiting Some Old Data
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The mercury content of seafood was a concern in the early 1970s, as it is today. At that time no systematic survey of a major American marine fishery had been published. The OSU Seafood Laboratory (now the OSU Coastal Oregon Marine Branch Experiment Station) conducted a study to fill that gap in knowledge about mercury content of local fish. Data from that study are presented in the table below. The study found mercury levels in most Oregon groundfish to be “significantly lower than 0.50 ppm.” Only spiny dogfish had mercury levels above 0.50 ppm.

Today much more is known about the effect of low levels of mercury in the human diet. An advisory and discussion of the topic as it relates to seafood can be found on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition Web site at <http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/admeHg.html>. Additional information is available from UC Davis’ SeafoodNIC at <http://seafood.ucdavis.edu/haccp/compendium/Chapt25.htm> and the EPA at: <http://www.epa.gov/ost/fish/mercurydata.html>

Mercury Content of Oregon Groundfish ¹

From 1971 and 1972 data

Species	Number of Samples	Mean Hg content (ppm)	Range	Standard Deviation	99% confidence interval (ppm)
Rex sole, <i>Errex zachirus</i> ²	82	0.119	0.05-0.24	0.050	0.10-0.14
Dover sole, <i>Microstomus pacificus</i>	46	0.122	0.01-0.29	0.076	0.09-0.17
Petrale sole, <i>Eopsetta jordani</i>	94	0.114	0.05-0.32	0.045	0.10-0.13
English sole, <i>Parophrys vetulus</i>	128	0.108	0.06-0.21	0.032	0.10-0.12
Sand sole, <i>Psettichthys melanostictus</i>	48	0.083	0.03-0.16	0.036	0.06-0.10
Starry flounder, <i>Platichthys stellatus</i>	42	0.235	0.08-0.50	0.102	0.18-0.29
Canary rockfish, <i>Sebastes pinniger</i>	18	0.197	0.08-0.50	0.123	0.08-0.32
Yellowtail rockfish, <i>Sebastes flavidus</i>	24	0.371	0.19-0.53	0.095	0.30-0.45
Flag rockfish, <i>Sebastes rubrivinctus</i>	40	0.136	0.06-0.43	0.091	0.08-0.19
Rougheye rockfish, <i>Sebastes aleutianus</i>	30	0.080	0.06-0.11	0.012	0.07-0.09
Lingcod, <i>Ophiodon elongatus</i>	48	0.351	0.06-0.73	0.240	0.26-0.49
Sablefish, <i>Anoplopoma fimbria</i>	52	0.138	0.03-0.65	0.148	0.07-0.21
Pacific hake, <i>Merluccius productus</i>	24	0.102	0.06-0.18	0.035	0.07-0.13
Arrowtooth flounder, <i>Atheresthes stomias</i>	26	0.154	0.01-0.33	0.089	0.08-0.22
Spiny dogfish, <i>Squalus acanthias</i>	88	0.602	0.20-1.14	0.275	0.52-0.71

¹ Taken from *Mercury Content of Oregon Groundfish*, Childs, E. A. and J. N. Gaffke, Technical Paper No. 3422, Oregon State University Agricultural Experiment Station (Seafood Laboratory) and *Fishery Bulletin* : Vol. 71, No. 3, 1973.

² Formerly *Glyptocephalus zachirus*.

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