

# Prevent Lead Contamination in Maple Sap and Syrup

John Henderson, OMAFRA, Risk Management Specialist

## Infosheet

OCTOBER 2008

Exposure to lead is known to have adverse effects on human health, especially on the nervous system, and particularly in children. In recent years, efforts have been made to eliminate lead in food products, including maple syrup. The primary source of lead in maple syrup is from lead-bearing equipment. Maple sap can react with lead-containing surfaces, allowing lead to leach into the sap. Lead-bearing equipment includes, but is not restricted to:

- galvanized equipment manufactured before 1994;
- most bronze and brass fittings;
- soldered equipment manufactured before 1995;
- terneplate" (a tin/lead alloy used in older equipment).

Although lead in maple syrup may also come from lead in the soil due to local rock composition, or from particles deposited in the soil from atmospheric pollution, lead levels from these sources are generally considered insignificant.

### What You Can Do to Avoid Lead Contamination

**1. Check and Update Your Equipment:** New or used, equipment must be manufactured with food-grade materials, either stainless steel, food-grade plastic, or glass-lined. Repairs must also be made with food-grade materials. Use lead test kits to identify possible lead sources. Kits may be purchased from equipment suppliers.

**2. Tell Your Neighbours:** Ask your neighbours if they have read about and implemented best practices in their maple operation. A contamination issue with any producer could impact your business too.

**3. Test Your Syrup:** When producing maple syrup each batch should be batch or lot coded. If you are using lead-bearing equipment you should have each batch tested prior to packing and selling to ensure it is not contaminated with lead. For those buying bulk syrup, protect your interests by testing every incoming lot. Testing of syrup should be done by a recognized accredited laboratory. For the location of an accredited laboratory near you, please contact us.

### Contacts:

**Todd Leuty, Agroforestry Specialist**

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

1 Stone Road West, 1st Floor

Guelph, Ontario N1G 4Y2

**Tel:** 519-826-3215

**Fax:** 519-826-3567

**E-mail:** todd.leuty@ontario.ca

**John Henderson, Risk Management Specialist**

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

95 Dundas St., RR 3

Brighton, Ontario K0K 1H0

**Tel:** (613)475-5175

**Fax:** (613)475-3835

**E-mail:** john.henderson@ontario.ca