

The wolf tapeworm scare

by RALPH MAUGHAN on JANUARY 27, 2010 · 16 COMMENTS · in DISEASE, WILDLIFE DISEASE, WOLVES

Montana official says it boils down to anti-wolf propaganda-

This is about the 4th time I have written about *Echinococcus granulosus*, but here is more information.

It made the news in the *Bozeman Chronicle* today. “Tapeworm in wolves causes stir, but biologists say there’s little to fear.” By Daniel Person.

This week the Montana State official wolf news — “the Wolf ‘Weekly’” — contained the following about tapeworms and wolves.

Echinococcus granulosus was recently documented in Montana and Idaho wolves in a peer reviewed journal article, although it is not known for sure where the *E. granulosus* originated. It is considered baseline information for wolves in Montana and Idaho. FWP has recently completed a fact sheet on *Echinococcus*, a tape worm. Here is a short summary.

Two different species of the tape worm are known to exist in Montana wildlife and the environment. The life cycle requires two different “hosts” – typically a definitive canine host where the worms live in the intestinal tract and from which eggs are shed in feces (wolf, coyote, fox, or domestic dog) and an intermediate host (rodents, domestic or wild ungulates, or occasionally a human) that ingests the eggs previously shed in the definitive host’s feces. In the intermediate host, eggs can turn into cysts in the organs (liver, lung, or brain). If the organ tissue of an infected intermediate host is eaten by a wild or domestic canine, adult tapeworms can develop in the intestinal track of the canine and be shed in feces. Cysts are rarely documented in muscle tissue of the immediate host. To become infected, a human must ingest (take into the body) the eggs which are passed with the feces of an infected canine. Eggs could also be ingested while consuming vegetation or drinking water that was contaminated with egg-laden feces. Humans could also

become infected by not washing their hands before eating if they've handled canine scats or contaminated canine fur. In the rare instance in which larval cysts may occur in muscle tissue of domestic or wild ungulates, thoroughly cooking the meat should kill any larvae. No reports were found of eggs developing into adult tapeworms in human intestines.

Basic precautions will minimize the risk of human infection by either eggs from canine scats or cysts in domestic or wild ungulate organs. Dog owners should not allow their dog to consume carcasses of wild or domestic ungulates. If your dog does have access to carcasses, talk to your veterinarian about an appropriate deworming strategy. Always wash your hands after handling a dog that has access to ungulate carcasses. When enjoying outdoor recreation, do not touch or disturb wolf, coyote, or fox scat. Hunters should wear gloves when field dressing a wolf, coyote, or fox carcass, and wash your hands, forearms etc., since they may have come into contact with feces or contaminated fur.

As with handling of any wild or domestic tissues or carcasses, use common sense and wash your hands. These simple precautions should remove nearly all potential for human infection. *[emphasis added]*

This is blunt, but for those that are slow, you must never sniff or eat shit, especially that from any carnivorous or omnivorous animal. It is a dangerous thing to do. In addition, wash your hands after handling wildlife and your pets if they go outside. There are many kinds of bacteria and animal parasites you can get from animals. Overall, these are much more of a threat than tapeworms.

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