



Cysticercus (Meat Measles)



What is Cysticercus?

A tapeworm infection in intermediate hosts where the larval form of the parasite forms a cysticercus in muscle tissues. The life cycle for this parasite includes a definitive carnivore host and an intermediate (herbivore) host.

Where is it found?

Cysticercus is most commonly caused by species of tapeworm in the *Taenia* genus. Common intermediate hosts in Wyoming include moose, mule deer, elk, white-tailed deer and rabbits.

How is it spread?

A carnivore host is infected with adult tapeworms. Eggs are then shed in the feces of the definitive host (carnivore) and consumed by an intermediate host (herbivore). Eggs hatch into larvae and migrate through the intestine to muscle tissue where they form cysticerci. The intermediate host is then consumed by a carnivore and the cycle repeats.

What are some clinical signs of disease?

No outward clinical signs seen in the majority of cases. When field dressing animals you may notice white nodules throughout muscle tissue or collections of watery filled sacs. Cysticerci can also be found in some of the visceral organs such as the lung, liver and intestines.

How does this disease affect me?

Humans are not at risk from *Cysticercus* found in wildlife.

Information for outdoor recreationists:

After field dressing an animal and removing all obvious cysts, cooking meat thoroughly to a temperature of at least 158°F can kill the parasite. **Never** feed infected meat to your pets as carnivores are definitive hosts and can become infected with adult tapeworms.

For additional information on *Cysticercus* or any other wildlife disease, please contact the WGFD Wildlife Health Laboratory at 307-745-5865.