



## TRICHINELLOSIS FACT SHEET

### **What is Trichinellosis?**

- Trichinellosis is a disease that can affect both animals and humans. It is caused by small nematodes (roundworms) of the *Trichinella* species. Infective larvae are transferred (from host-to-host) by the consumption of raw or undercooked infected meat.
- In many countries, human Trichinellosis has been associated with the consumption of improperly or uncooked meat from infected swine. Regulations to detect and control Trichinellosis in swine have been in place in many countries for more than 100 years.
- Globally, outbreaks of human Trichinellosis associated with pork from abattoirs operating under modern inspection systems rarely occur; however, cases which are associated with the consumption of undercooked meat from wild boars, horses, wildlife species such as walrus and bear, and outdoor-reared and home-processed swine continue to be reported.

### **In which NWT wildlife does Trichinellosis Occur?**

- Trichinellosis occurs in bears (black, grizzly and polar bears), wolves, foxes (arctic and red), wolverine, lynx, walrus, seals, and ground squirrels.

### **What are the signs of Trichinellosis in wild game meat?**

- Animals may appear healthy.
- Trichinosis is hard to detect when butchering because there are few signs.
- Larvae form cysts usually in the muscles of the jaw, tongue, and diaphragm.
- Cysts may not be visible to the naked eye.
- Animals may have swollen intestines with small bruises.
- Affected muscles and associated lymph nodes (glands) can be soft and swollen.

### **How do people get Trichinellosis?**

- People can get Trichinellosis by eating infected meat that has not been adequately cooked.
- ALL bear meat should be considered infected.
- Pets can also contract Trichinellosis if fed uncooked or undercooked meat.

### **How can Trichinellosis be prevented in people?**

- Meat must be cooked\* thoroughly to an internal temperature of at least 77°C (171°F) throughout the cooked meat.
- Use a stem thermometer to measure the temperature throughout the cooked meat.

\* Freezing meat does NOT kill the *Trichinella* species found in NWT's wildlife.

\* Smoking, drying, salting or microwaving do not always kill the parasites.

- Only proper cooking or canning is known to make the meat safe to eat.

### **What are the signs and symptoms of Trichinellosis in people?**

- Signs and symptoms are variable, but may include: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, stomach pain, fatigue, aching joints, eye swelling, muscle pain
- It may be fatal if the worms interfere with the heart, diaphragm, lungs or brain.
- Consult with your doctor if you have any of the above symptoms for up to 8 weeks after eating wild game meat.
- It is readily treatable if diagnosed early.

### **What should you do if you suspect Trichinellosis?**

- To report a (tentative) diagnosis in a person contact your local health care provider through a health centre, physician clinic or hospital.
- Submit samples of the animal's tongue, jaw muscles and/ or diaphragm.
- A large sample of muscle (at least 4 oz.) is required for analysis.
- If samples are available from the suspect contaminated meat, you will be directed about how and where to submit them.
- Treatment for Trichinellosis is complicated as treatment varies with the stage of development of the worm.

Contact an infectious Disease Specialist for treatment.

### **For more information contact:**

- Contact the Office of The Chief Public Health Officer at 867-767-9066 ext. 49262.

***Trichinellosis is a Reportable Disease in the NWT!***