July 11th 2010

Dear Steve,

In my career as an environmental scientist engaged in matters of public interest, the bane of my existence was the mindless parroting by professionals of "professional opinion". On the face of it hydatid disease is a rare disease. And yes, in merely reading the technical literature, you might get that impression. That is, if you are incapable of doing independent checking and counter checking. Your state veterinarian is exempt, so far, from taking full responsibility for his opinion in a court of law where he must confront hostile, public cross examination. As an environmental scientist I was never afforded that luxury, as my statement of fact and opinion had to be able to pass hostile public cross examination. I am used to that and therefore, act accordingly.

If you do no more than read the professional literature pertaining to hydatid disease, and I have done so, you spot universals, one being that the family dog, infected with dog tape worm, is a very real if not mortal danger to its owners. This is so because family dogs defecate in the vicinity of the home and their feces carries loads of infective dog tape worm eggs that readily contaminate the yard, the veranda, the house etc. Of course, you can become infected by handling wild canids infected with hydatid tape worms, and jurisdictions like my province of British Columbia warn of that. However, these are minor sources compared to the infected family dog.

Ask how does a family dog become infected with hydatid tape worms?

Answer, by feeding on offal of infected cervids (deer family). This may be deliberate, as sled dogs being fed hydatid contaminated offal from caribou or moose, or it may be inadvertently, such as the dog coming across gut-piles from hunter killed elk or deer etc. That's what you in Idaho need to pay attention to primarily. Where can family dogs come in contact with hydatid infected elk and deer, and how can they gain access to the lungs or livers of infected deer and elk, for it's there that the cysts reside.

If you have no hydatid infected elk and deer, you have nothing to worry.

If you do have hydatid infected elk and deer, where do they concentrate, and where are concentrations of these infected big game animals in contact with humans?

Ranches, farms, rural hamlets, recreational communities where hydatid infected elk or deer concentrate are at risk, especially if the animals are trying to evade wolf predation. That really makes them seek out human habitation and safety.

How do rural dogs surrounded by infected deer an elk get infected in turn?

Well, I leave that to your imagination.

Why, if infected offal is fed to sled dogs or family dogs in native hamlets is the disease rare? The technical literature does not give an answer. The answer is because wolves, the primary carriers of hydatid disease, are kept down in numbers ruthlessly. Our northern natives practice a dog sled culture, and sled dogs and wolves are incompatible. So, they kill any wolf that comes into their reach, very effective today with snow mobiles. In Greenland, natives survived only where they eradicated wolves, so that there were regions with wolves and no natives and vice versa. This lasted till wolves were exterminated in the last century, (but returned again via Ellesmere land).

In my province of British Columbia wolves were controlled via aerial poisoning; up to nine predator control officers worked full time to eradicate noxious predators, and they were good at it! A call by a rancher brought them in to help and eliminate wolves as they did here around my house. We have used aerial gunning to control wolves. Trappers were free to trap wolves, any number. Hunters automatically are entitled to take wolves on

their license, the bag limit currently varies fro region to region. I can take three on Vancouver Island. Any rancher or farmer experiencing problems with wolves who calls for help (as my neighbors did) will be assisted and is allowed to shoot or trap wolves as he or she sees fit. In the recent past it was also expected of game wardens to go out after the hunting season and trap or snare wolves.

Does that sound like the practices in Idaho? We have no hydatid problem in British Columbia. Guess why? And the above is not to be found in the professional literature.

Is it relevant? You be the judge!

And, please remember, despite the above we still have wolves and are being subjected to pressure by environmentalists so that we may wind up with hydatid disease as a problem after all. The historical experience here is precious, as is the historical experience from other places with hydatid disease, including the determined and effective in Finland to remove infected wolves using army helicopters and submachine guns. Now, that's not in the narrow, refereed literature either.

Is it relevant? You be the judge!

Sincerely,

Valerius Geist, Professor Emeritus of Environmental Science