

Stockwell, Hope

From: Mark R. Johnson DVM [mjohnson@wildliferesources.org]
Sent: Sunday, May 02, 2010 7:57 PM
To: Stockwell, Hope
Subject: Letter of Testimony
Attachments: Echinococcus let to MT.pdf

Dear Hope Stockwell,

Please accept the attached letter of testimony from me for the MT Environmental Quality Council that is meeting FRIDAY MAY 7.

I will not be attending the meeting in person.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Also, please notify me if there is any reason why my testimony may not be presented at the meeting.

Respectfully,
Mark

Mark R. Johnson DVM
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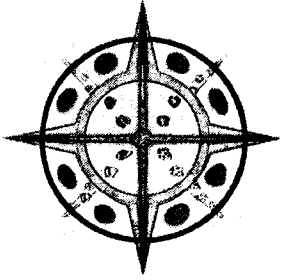
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GWR is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting animal welfare and wildlife professionals and bringing care, honor, and respect to animals touched by research and management.



GLOBAL WILDLIFE RESOURCES INC.

MARK R. JOHNSON DVM, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

April 30, 2010

To: Montana Legislature's Environmental Quality Council

From: Mark Johnson DVM, Wildlife Veterinarian

Re: The presence of Echinococcus spp. in reintroduced wolves

I am a wildlife veterinarian and Founder and Executive Director of a non-profit organization, Global Wildlife Resources, Inc. While employed by the National Park Service in Yellowstone National Park, I was Project Veterinarian for the 1995-1996 Gray Wolf Reintroduction Program. After extensive consultations with many professionals, I developed and coordinated the veterinary aspects for reintroducing Canadian wolves into central Idaho and Yellowstone National Park.

I hereby testify that it is extremely unlikely that any reintroduced wolf from Canada could have carried Echinococcus spp. tapeworms into the U.S. Droncit (praziquantel) is a parasiticide which is 100% effective for removing tapeworms in dogs and other canids with a single treatment which can be administered orally or by injection. Every wolf was treated at least twice with Droncit injections before they were transported into the United States. For what it is worth, in addition to Droncit, every wolf was given Ivermectin and fenbendazole which also act against parasites.

I am not able to provide a hard copy of my publication, but the medications given to the reintroduced wolves is published as a case study in the book, Large Mammal Restoration.

Here is the citation:

Johnson, M.R. 2001. Case 2. Health Aspects of Gray Wolf Restoration *in* D.S. Maehr, R.F. Noss, and J.L. Larkin, eds. Large Mammal Restoration, Island Press, Washington. Pp.163-167.

If the Echinococcus tapeworm in wolves becomes such an important issue to the state of Montana, then what does the state propose to do about this disease (which is no worse than other zoonotic diseases)?

Here are some of the proposed courses of action against Echinococcus:

1. Reducing wolf numbers will not reduce the prevalence of the tapeworm which is carried by the ungulates and is not dependent on wolf densities. It is either here or not here.

2. Burning winter habitat is absolutely ineffective because no one can burn enough land nor would it decimate all of the eggs; and the area will become "re-infected" as soon as it is re-used by wolves, coyotes, or foxes. Wolves are not getting infected from the "infected" land, they are getting infected from the ungulates. And people would not potentially get infected from a broad area of land. They would potentially get it from handling wolf feces and very rarely from their pets.

3. Orally treating wolf packs is absolutely ineffective and impractical. Will you treat every wolf pack? Will you treat every wolf? Will you treat only infected wolves - then how do you confirm a wolf or pack is infected? Oral medications cannot be delivered in a practical or effective manner. And if you possibly treated any wolf, they would get re-infected the next time they ate an infected ungulate.

4. The following point is the most important point. Has any wolf population ever been managed for Echinococcus? And if any has, it would have been ineffective and that would be documented as well.

I recommend dropping the issue of Echinococcus and discuss managing wolf and ungulate populations for the health of the animal populations and the ecosystem; and discuss how to also manage for a healthy approach to supporting the ranching community. (Be pro-active in helping ranchers reduce depredations.)

Echinococcus is endemic to the state of Montana. Therefore it is important for all people who could have exposure through outdoor activity or from their pets to take precautions to minimize exposure to this disease, just as they should take precautions against the other zoonotic diseases in Montana such as plague, tularemia, hantavirus, West Nile Virus, and tick-borne diseases.

Respectfully,

Mark R. Johnson DVM
Wildlife Veterinarian
Project Veterinarian for the 1995-96 Gray Wolf Reintroduction Program

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