University of Saskatchewan

Groupe de recherche en épidémiologie des zoonoses et santé publique

Université de Montréal

# Wildlife Diseases Important for Human Health and Food Safety

*Study Results for Foxes and Lynx Harvested in Nunatsiavut and Western and Central Labrador*

## Rabies

- Rabies is a virus transmitted through saliva in bite wounds. Arctic foxes are known to carry rabies and outbreaks are occasionally reported in northern Canada. Red foxes can also carry the virus.
- All foxes collected were tested, and all results were negative.
- If concerned, people can wear gloves when skinning foxes, avoid contact with foxes behaving strangely or coming unusually close to people and pets, report these animals to their local wildlife officer, and have their pets vaccinated against rabies.

Foxes trapped in 2018-2020

Nain: 9

Hopedale: 29

Labrador City: 48

North West River: 24

Lynx trapped in 2018-2019

Labrador City: 4

North West River: 8

## *Toxoplasmosis (Toxoplasma gondii)*

- This parasite can be found in organs and muscles of infected animals. It is shed in the environment by native wild cats (such as lynx) and outdoor domestic cats. People and animals become infected by eating/drinking contaminated food and water or by eating animals that are infected.
- For foxes, 30 of 110 had this parasite (9 from North West River, 10 from Labrador City, 7 from Hopedale, and 4 from Nain). For lynx, 3 of 4 were positive in Labrador City, and one in North West River.
    - Almost any wild animal can have this parasite. Freezing at -20°C for 3 days or cooking meat thoroughly will kill the parasite.

## *Trichinellosis (Trichinella)*

- This parasite is found in muscle tissue and animals become infected by eating and scavenging meat.
- No foxes were tested but one lynx from Labrador City had the parasite in their muscles.
- Any meat-eater (carnivore) can have this parasite. People should cook carnivore meat thoroughly (lynx for example), as this parasite is not killed by freezing, smoking, salting, microwaving, or drying.

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NUNATSIAVUT Kaujisapvinga Research Centre

Memorial University

Newfoundland Labrador

Contacts: Émilie Bouchard, PhD student, emilie_bou@hotmail.com
Emily Jenkins, Professor, emily.jenkins@usask.ca
Patrick Leighton, Associate Professor, patrick.a.leighton@umontreal.ca