

Pighealth BYTES

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Cysticercosis

Your own reference source on pig health



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Cysticercosis, or Pork Measles, occurs when the larvae or cysticerci of the tapeworm, *Taenia solium*, are found in the skeletal and cardiac muscles. This tapeworm's adult stage occurs in human intestines.

Infestation of man was once widespread but today is contained by modern hygiene, only appearing as the occasional sporadic case. However, in some countries it can still be a major public health issue, for example in some South American countries.

Lifecycle of *Taenia solium*

Infected humans shed egg-laden proglottids in their faeces. These eggs can remain viable for many weeks on pasture until they are ingested by pigs.

They hatch in the swine's upper small intestine producing oncospheres, which then penetrate the wall of the small intestine and are carried around the pig's body via the circulation.

They come to rest in the muscles, or heart muscle, where they nidate and, in 8-12 weeks, become infective cysticerci. The cysticerci, which are known as *Cysticercus cellulosae*, appear as sub-spherical, whitish, fluid-filled cysts with a one centimetre diameter. These cysts can remain infective for up to two years but then they die and undergo caseation and calcification. Cysticerci are found mainly in the most active muscles, such those of the tongue, heart and legs.

Diagnosis

There are no specific clinical signs of cysticercosis. A history can sometimes suggest cysticercosis, for example outdoor pigs with frequent access to human faeces.

The presence of *C. cellulosae* on post-mortem is diagnostic. Sometimes lingual palpation will reveal cysts. Crushing the white spot (scolex) and finding taenoid hooklets is also diagnostic.

Zoonotic implications

Viable *C. cellulosae* can infect people so they are routinely looked for during meat inspection at the abattoir. If large numbers of these cysts are found, the carcase should be condemned. If fewer cysts are present the carcase must be cooked before it is released. Cooking at 170°C for three hours kills the cysts.

Natural Remedies

Novation

Nuscience