



THE SPREAD OF WHIRLING DISEASE

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF WHIRLING DISEASE?

The movement of fish, mud, and water can spread whirling disease. It can be transmitted through spores that attach to equipment (used for swimming, paddling, boating, water pumping, fishing), pets, or through infected fish (alive or dead) and fish parts.

- Never move live or dead fish or fish parts from one waterbody to another.
- Dispose of fish or any fish parts in the garbage. One infected fish can contain thousands of myxospores; disposing of fish or fish parts into a waterbody could spread the infection to a clean drainage.



Before moving a boat or any equipment (e.g. hip waders, life jackets, kayaks, etc.) between water bodies, be sure to:

CLEAN

- Clean and inspect watercraft, trailers, and all equipment that has been in contact with water or fish. This includes boats, motors, boots, waders, bait buckets, and swimming floats.
- Remove all mud, sand, and plant materials before leaving the shore.
- Rinse, scrub, or pressure wash your boat and equipment away from storm drains, ditches or waterways. Use hot water if possible (90°C or hotter).
- Bathe pets before allowing them to enter another water body.

DRAIN

- Before leaving the shoreline, drain water from watercraft and equipment onto dry land.

DRY

- Dry the watercraft and/or equipment completely between trips and allow the wet areas to air dry. Allow for a minimum of 24 hours of drying time before entering new waters.
- Leave compartments open on boats and equipment, and sponge out standing water.

QUICK FACTS WHIRLING DISEASE

- The first case of whirling disease in Canada was confirmed in August 2016 in Banff National Park, Alberta. The disease has now been found in multiple watersheds in southwestern Alberta.
- Whirling disease was first observed in the northeastern United States in the 1950s. It remains prevalent in western and northeastern areas of the country.
- There is **no treatment** currently available for whirling disease; containment and prevention are the best response.
- There are no health concerns for people swimming in or drinking water that contains whirling disease. Eating an infected fish is not known to cause harmful effects to people or other animals.
- Whirling disease may cause a large number of mortalities in susceptible fish populations (trout, salmon, whitefish) potentially killing up to 90% of juveniles; however not all populations or species may be affected to the same level.
- Whirling disease is caused by a parasite that has two hosts; a fish and a freshwater worm. Fish may become infected by directly encountering the life stage of the parasite that is released from the worm. Once inside the fish, the parasite affects the cartilage near the spine, leading to skeletal deformities of the spine or skull. This causes the fish to abnormally whirl in a tail-chasing behaviour and/or display a blackened tail.



Photo: State of Colorado



Photo: State of Colorado

Infected fish (L), healthy fish (R) Trout showing signs of whirling disease infection

FOR MORE INFO OR TO REPORT SIGNS OF WHIRLING DISEASE, CALL:

1-877-855-3222

or email FrontCounterBC@gov.bc.ca



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Printed: September 2017



Freshwater Fisheries
Society of BC



HABITAT CONSERVATION
TRUST FOUNDATION