

September 24, 1976

(1:20)

Undercooked Fish

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
DOCUMENT
SEP 30 1976
ST. PAUL CAMPUS LIBRARIES

(612) 973-0710

consumer radio briefs

Persons can be infected with the broad-fish tapeworm from raw, undercooked or inadequately picked freshwater fish--usually walleye or northern pike from the Great Lakes region.

The Public Health Service's Center for Disease Control recently reported a human case of the tapeworm contracted from eating inadequately cooked northern pike while the person was on a fishing expedition in Canada.

The tapeworm sufferer's only symptom was a mild, intermittent lower stomach pain which appeared two months after consuming the fish. The patient eventually passed tapeworm segments measuring two feet in length. Minnesota Extension Veterinarian Michael Pullen says symptoms are often minor or absent and may appear five or six weeks after eating the infected fish. Nausea, vomiting, weakness, dizziness, diarrhea or constipation may occur.

The parasite is spread, Pullen says, when the infective eggs from the feces of humans, bears, dogs and other fish-eating mammals contaminate freshwater sources. The copepod serves as an intermediate host so that when fish feed naturally on the copepod, they become infected.

Human infection can be prevented by cooking freshwater fish thoroughly before eating them. Freezing fish at fourteen degrees fahrenheit for 24 hours also will destroy the parasite.

Pullen says freezing is suggested prior to pickling or smoking because inadequate treatment during either of these processes could leave the fish as a potential infection source. He also urges proper disposal of human sewage to prevent the water pollution that can lead to such tapeworms.

* * * *