

QUICK FACTS WHIRLING DISEASE

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

Whirling disease affects salmonid fishes including trout, salmon and whitefish and is caused by a parasite, *Myxobolus cerebralis*. It can be transmitted through spores that attach to equipment used for swimming, paddling, boating, water pumping, fishing, 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.

The movement of fish, mud, and water can spread whirling disease. 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. 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).

DRAIN

- Before leaving the shoreline, drain water from watercraft and equipment onto dry land.
- Remember to “Pull the Plug” because it is illegal to transport watercraft with the drain plug still in place.

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:

- The first case of whirling disease in Canada was confirmed in August 2016 in Johnson Lake, Alberta, in Banff National Park. The disease has also been confirmed within the Bow River watershed outside of the national park. Provincial monitoring is ongoing.
- 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 affects salmonid fishes including trout, salmon, and whitefish and is caused by the parasite, *Myxobolus cerebralis*.
- In infected waters, whirling disease may cause a large number of mortalities, potentially killing up to 90% of juveniles in susceptible fish; however not all populations or species may be affected to the same level.
- The parasite 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

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Trout showing signs of whirling disease infection

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES, CALL:
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