

Human Health and Marine Resources

SIGNIFICANT CONCERNS EXIST ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN HEALTH AND SUBSISTENCE AND COMMERCIAL USE OF MARINE RESOURCES.

To date, the Board has funded one study focused directly on human health.

HUMANS :: Human Health and Marine Resources

Health Risks of Eating Walrus

Project 641

THE ROLE OF WALRUS IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF HUMAN *trichinellosis* disease among indigenous people on the Chukchi Peninsula in Russia was the focus of Project 641. This research relates to our own Native communities in Alaska where walrus meat may be an important part of the subsistence diet. Subsistence hunting of marine mammals is a primary source of food and carries a health risk associated with consumption of *trichinella*-infected walrus meat in raw or fermented form.

Researchers tested individuals in two Russian communities, Lorino and Lavrentiya, for infections, which were found to be highest in marine mammal hunters and school children, although there were no clinical signs of disease noted. Four mammal species—walrus, red fox, farmed polar fox, and sled dogs—carried the parasite. In Lorino, 6% of the 361 individuals tested were infected. In Lavrentiya, only about 1.3% of the 76 people tested positive for it. The major source of infection in humans was walrus meat, although polar fox meat also played a role.



Hunting walrus.

Lyalya Baikina



Walrus on ice pack.

Anatoly Kochnev