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Helminth fauna of the American mink (*Mustela vison* Schreber, 1777) in Belorussian Polesie

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The American mink is a mustelid species that has been introduced into Belarus. Acclimatization of this animal began in the 1950s. American minks are now widespread nearly throughout the territory of Belarus, and have accumulated many helminth species from the Belorussian aboriginal animals.

Our report is the result of helminthological examination (dissection and organ compression) of 50 American minks carried out in Belorussian Polesie (the Brest and Gomel regions in the southern part of Belarus) between 1980 and 1998. The animals were killed by hunters from the Belorussian Society of Hunters and Fisherman.

The overall rate of infection of American minks by helminths was 78.0%. These animals were hosts for 19 species of helminths: six Trematoda, two Cestoda, ten Nematoda and one Acanthocephala species. The results of our helminthological examination are shown in Table 1. The trematode *Isthmiophora melis* and the nematodes *Aonchoteca putorii*, *Pearsonema mucronata* and *Skrjabingylus nasicola* were the most frequently detected parasites. The prevalence of these helminths in American minks was 20.0%, 20.0%, 30.0% and 16.0%, respectively. The number of parasites varied from one to ten specimens. *A. putorii* and *I. melis* localized in the

Table 1 Helminth infections of American minks in Belorussian Polesie

Species of helminths	Number infected	Prevalence (%)	No. of helminths (min–max)
Trematoda			
<i>Alaria alata</i> (Goeze, 1782), larvae	3	6.0	500–500
<i>Apophallus donicus</i> (Skrjabin et Lindtrop, 1919)	3	6.0	3–15
<i>Isthmiophora melis</i> (Schränk, 1788)	10	20.0	1–10
<i>Metorchis bilis</i> (Braun, 1890)	4	8.0	1–6
<i>Opisthorchis felineus</i> (Rivolta, 1884)	2	4.0	2–10
<i>Pseudamphistomum truncatum</i> (Rudolphi, 1819)	3	6.0	2–8
Cestoda			
<i>Spirometra erinacei</i> (Rudolphi, 1819), larvae	5	10.0	1–5
<i>Taenia mustelae</i> Gmelin, 1790	2	4.0	2–6
Nematoda			
<i>Aonchoteca putorii</i> (Rudolphi, 1819)	10	20.0	1–10
<i>Baylisascaris devosi</i> (Sprent, 1952)	2	4.0	1–5
<i>Crenosoma taiga</i> Skrjabin et Petrow, 1928	2	4.0	1–9
<i>Filaroides martis</i> (Werner, 1782)	4	8.0	1–4
<i>Molineus patens</i> Petrow, 1928	4	8.0	1–6
<i>Mustelivingylus skrjabini</i> Romanov et Kontrimavichus, 1962	2	4.0	2–4
<i>Pearsonema mucronata</i> (Molin, 1858)	15	30.0	1–10
<i>Skrjabingylus nasicola</i> Petrow, 1927	8	16.0	1–7
<i>Strongyloides martis</i> Petrow, 1940	1	2.0	2
<i>Trichinella</i> sp., larvae	2	4.0	2–4 in 1 g muscle tissue
Acanthocephala			
<i>Corynosoma strumosum</i> (Rudolphi, 1802), larvae	2	4.0	1–5

intestine, *P. mucronata* in the urinary bladder, *S. nasicola* in the frontal sinuses.

American mink is an animal that lives near water, eats water animals and can be infected by *Apophallus donicus*, *Corynosoma strumosum* larvae, *Metorchis bilis*, *Opisthorchis felineus*, *Pseudamphistomum truncatum* (from fishes and *C. strumosum* larvae, also from amphipod crustaceans), *Isthmiophora melis* and larvae of

Alaria alata and *Spirometra erinacei* (from amphibians and *S. erinacei* larvae, also from copepod crustaceans). All these species of helminths and larvae of *Trichinella* sp. are very important in medical and veterinary sciences. They are known parasites of humans and dogs (all helminth species), cats (except *C. strumosum*) and pigs (except *A. donicus*, *C. strumosum*, *P. truncatum*).