Trichinellosis, Chiloe island, Chile

A total of 9 persons in Caguach and Achao communities may be affected by the parasitic disease known as trichinellosis, after an investigation performed by health authorities found 9 cases confirmed in Chiloe by the Public Health Institute (ISP, according to its Spanish initials) and with 6 more suspected cases. The health institution started performing inspections and sanitary education campaigns.

The information was given by Dr. Christian Araneda, Head of Health Authorities in Chiloe, who explained that in Caguach Island 8 persons had a confirmed trichinellosis infection, after one person (illegally) killed a pig and sold the meat to some of his neighbors. "Until now there are no suspicious cases in Caguach and one person is receiving therapy. All of them are in a good condition," Dr. Araneda added.

The health care officer also added that in Achao there is one confirmed case of trichinellosis, and there are 3 persons considered as suspicious cases, presumably because of having eaten pork from an illegal slaughterhouse. It was also reported that in Castro city there are 3 additional suspicious cases.

After the outbreak was reported, Dr. Araneda explained that some measures had been taken. These consist in monitoring the clinical condition of affected persons and performing inspections to butcher shops during next weekend in the affected communities. Also, we will deliver educational lectures using specially designed material, aiming to prevent the occurrence of new cases of trichinellosis", he said.

Dr. Araneda also reminded that in Quellon community, in January 2011, an outbreak of trichinellosis occurred due to eating pork from an illegal slaughterhouse. This is the reason why preventive measures are being enforced in order to halt the dissemination of this parasitic disease, which is caused by a small worm that belongs to _Trichinella_ genus.

Humans acquire the infection by eating pork contaminated with larvae from the parasite, and gastrointestinal symptoms (diarrhea), muscle and joint pain are some of the main symptoms. When the infection fully develops in humans, cardiac involvement, pneumonitis and, less frequently, encephalitis are the main causes of death with this otherwise non-curable disease.

Here are some preventive measures:
- Do not purchase pork from illegal slaughterhouses or from street sellers (particularly those who sell already fixed foods).
- People must buy pork only in authorized butcher shops who had undergone proper inspection. For every purchase you make, the seller must give you a receipt, which serves as a guarantee of what you bought.
- Always eat properly cooked pork (or any type of meat).
- Do not eat ham or sausages from doubtful origin, or products without a label properly stating their origin.
- Pigs must be raised in clean places. These animals must not be fed with decomposed foods, and the presence of rats must be avoided.
[Human infections with Trichinella are not uncommon in Chile but the current prevalence in humans is not known. A serosurvey published in 1994 (Contreras MC et al. Epidemiology of trichinosis in Chile. Prevalence study by immunodiagnostic reactions. Bol Chil Parasitol. 1994 Jul-Dec;49(3-4):73-5 [Article in Spanish]) did find that 1.5 percent of the individuals tested had Trichinella specific antibodies. Reference to further studies can be found in the moderators comments to the 2 outbreaks reported in 2011 (see below).


[see also:
2011
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Trichinellosis - Chile: (LR) 20111122.3427 2010
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Trichinellosis - Chile: (VD) 20100824.2969]
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