

Acute Streptococcus Infection of the Skin and Subcutaneous Tissues of the Head

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Mink are occasionally affected with a diffuse inflammation of the skin and underlying tissue of the entire head region. We have observed this condition in Standards, Aleutians and Imperial Platinums. It appears suddenly and is usually fatal. The condition should not be confused with head abscesses (boils), distemper, or hydrocephalus.

CAUSE AND SYMPTOMS

The malady is caused by a type of *Streptococcus*, a germ related to the one causing strangles in horses and mastitis in cows. The factors that lead to this type of inflammation in mink are not known. It may be caused by a small head wound which will allow the *Streptococcus* organisms to enter and multiply. Although there is a possibility that the infection is food borne, it does not appear to be caused in this manner.

The rancher first notes this condition when the mink refuses its feed and appears sluggish in its movements. Within a short period the head of the mink begins to swell, not as with an abscess when the inflammation is usually confined to the side or top of the head, but over the entire surface. In this condition (Fig. 1) the swelling involves the top and sides of the head, the nose, and the throat and

extends to the adjoining neck region. Here the swelling stops and a raised edge can be felt circling the neck. This edge of the swelling is a distinctive feature of the disease. The eyes may be clear or may

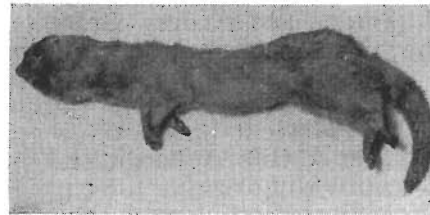


Fig. 1.—Imperial Platinum mink showing a *Streptococcus* infection of the skin and subcutaneous tissues of the head. Note the swelling which involves the entire head and extends to the neck.

show a discharge. The lids are swollen. One can easily see how this condition may be confused with distemper since swollen heads and eye-lids, and an eye discharge are commonly observed in distemper. To differentiate the two diseases, an examination for distemper inclusions by your veterinarian or a diagnostic laboratory may be necessary.

PATHOLOGY

When the skin of the head is incised, a thin watery fluid is released from beneath the skin. When abscesses are opened the exudate is thick and never clear. Other post-mortem findings are not significant. In hydrocephalus the head appears swollen, but the swelling

in this case is caused by a large amount of fluid within the skull cavity.

TREATMENT

As soon as this type of a swelling is noted the mink should be treated. If treatment is withheld, death may occur within 72 hours. Since *Streptococcus* is the cause, we believe that penicillin would be the treatment of choice. The penicillin may be obtained from your veterinarian. If it is available, use penicillin suspended in wax or oil, as it is more slowly absorbed and fewer injections will have to be given. Good supportive treatment is also necessary. If the mink is eating, additional liver should be given; or if it refuses food, injectable amino acids may be administered.

Western Stockmen and Government Marketing

In a period when most Canadian farm producers are demanding floor prices, parity prices, subsidies and what not, it is encouraging to note that the Western Stockgrowers Association has a clear view of the meaning and implications of government interference in marketing.

At a meeting of this association held in Calgary on February 10th, the following resolution was passed — "Resolved that this convention go on record as favoring a free and open market for its products. And that we are opposed in prin-

ciple to the tendency of government intervention in the marketing of our agricultural commodities, as we believe that this type of intervention is fundamentally wrong and will eventually destroy our free institutions and make us mere tools of bureaucratic dictatorship. We believe that in spite of the fact that we are possibly a minority, as judged by recent happenings, that when it is a case of trading what is represented as economic security for our freedom of action, we are wholeheartedly in favor of retaining the latter."

The Western Stockgrowers Association, which was established in 1896, was holding its 54th annual convention in Calgary. The executive secretary, Mr. Kenneth Coppock, remarks: "This association, through its long history, has stood staunchly for principle and for the preservation of traditions laid down by people who opened up the country so that others might follow. It has stood steadfastly for individual rights, fully believing that therein lies the only true road to individual freedom. During the second world war it temporarily departed from its traditional position and relinquished control of its industry and its product to necessary government control."

Charlie Simpson III

Charlie Simpson, well known mink rancher of North Kildonan, is at present in hospital. A host of friends in the fur farming industry in Manitoba and all over the continent hope for a quick recovery. Charlie underwent a major operation and is not receiving visitors for the present.

* From the Fur Animal Disease Research Laboratory, U.S. Bureau of Animal Industry, in collaboration with the Division of Veterinary Science, Agricultural Experiment Station, State College of Washington.