

How do you determine which birds and snails carry the schistosomes causing swimmer's itch on a particular lake?

Dissect birds, hatch recovered parasite eggs, and expose lab reared snails to see if they can be infected. DNA analysis plays a role in classification.

How can one be sure that New Zealand Scaup play such an important role as bird hosts on so many lakes?

On Lake Wanaka where Duck itch has been researched, virtually all of the NZ Scaup are infected.

The scaup usually harbor heavy infections compared to other species of bird hosts.

Can a relatively few NZ scaup have an important Duck itch impact on a large recreational lake?

Absolutely, scaup are heavily infected and there is a high prevalence of infection. Scaup are very mobile. One must consider the dynamics of the life cycle. For example, if one miracidium infects a snail, that intermediate host (after approximately 30 days) will produce several thousand cercariae every day it lives.

Are Canada geese and swans important hosts for swimmer's itch?

This has not been determined. The stage that causes swimmer's itch comes from the snail and not directly from the bird host.

What can be done to prevent or to reduce swimmer's itch?

Use high SPF (15-50+) sunscreen with phenoxyethanol in it as an ingredient. Read the label or ask. This has been shown in Wanaka exposure trials to prevent the disease. An alternative sunscreen might be one with DEET, however it is not recommended for children.

Avoid swimming for long periods in shallow water.

Avoid swimming in areas where Duck itch is a problem and where there is an onshore wind.

Post appropriate signs on beaches where swimmer's itch is an annual problem

Do not encourage birds to stay in your area by feeding them

What can individuals do who have a bad case of swimmer's itch?

See a doctor or chemist and ask for something to relieve the itching. Topical creams and Calamine lotion will reduce the itching. Antihistamine tablets may help.

What types of control are used to combat swimmer's itch?

Chemical and biological control have been researched in Lake Wanaka. These methods may be effective, but are prohibitively expensive and would have to be repeated every season at great cost.

Can swimmer's itch be eliminated completely?

No method will eliminate the source of Duck itch on a given lake.

Why are control measures so costly?

Most control efforts either are time-consuming or they require the purchase of costly chemicals like Bayluscide.

Is it legal to shoot NZ scaup or other species of waterfowl that harbor parasites that cause swimmer's itch?

The NZ scaup is protected and specific permission is required to take them. Others can be shot in season.

Why hasn't the problem been researched more extensively?

Research is being conducted world-wide. It is expensive.

The disease also is only thought to be a nuisance.

Is there reason for optimism for swimmer's itch control in the future?

Yes. Recent exposure studies here have shown that the use of a suitable off-the-shelf sunscreen should be effective in preventing cercarial penetration of human skin.

For further information and any questions, please contact

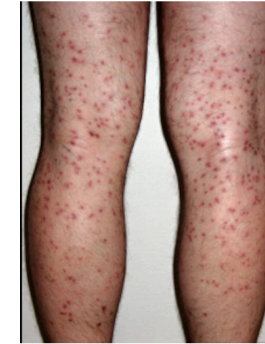
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DUCK ITCH



WHAT IS IT ?



NZ SCAUP

