PARASITES IN CANNED SALMON

Technical Bulletin CS-18

All living organisms, including fish, can have parasites. The most common roundworm parasite that can naturally be present in Salmon are in the family *Anisakidae* and are sometimes referred to as anisakid nematodes. Sea lice are ectoparasites that may be attached to the skin of the salmon. Occasionally, myxosporean parasites of the Genus *Henneguya* may also be present in salmon.

It is important to note that parasites are a natural occurrence, not contamination. Parasites do not present a health concern in thoroughly cooked fish. The process of heating raw fish sufficiently to kill bacterial pathogens is also sufficient to kill parasites. Canned salmon is thermally processed to commercial sterility, which is more than adequate to ensure the destruction of parasites.

The presence of inactivated harmless parasites in canned salmon is not commonly observed visually during sensory evaluation. Some physical and chemical breakdown of the parasites occurs during the thermal process, which may render parasites unnoticeable; however, occasionally parasites may be visible. During the course of extensive examinations conducted under the Salmon Control Plan, we have occasionally noted the presence of sea lice, and when this occurs the observation is documented on the examination report for that product code. Visual observation of roundworm parasites rarely if ever occurs in regular canned salmon, and the presence of *Henneguya* may only be visible on rare occasions of heavy infestation. It should be reiterated that even when visible in canned salmon, the parasites are harmless.

Our laboratory has also examined a number of exhibits submitted by consumers as “worms” found in the canned salmon that they purchased. Through stereoscopic examination, we are able to determine that nearly all of these exhibits are actually the spinal nerve cord that is loosely attached to the backbone vertebrae of the salmon. These are also harmless natural constituents of the salmon. Please see SPA Technical Bulletin CS-12 Nerve Cords in Canned Salmon for additional information.

References:
- *FDA Fish and Fisheries Products Hazards and Controls Guidance, Ch 5 Parasites* - Third Edition
- *Seafood Network Information Center (Seafood NIC)* – Sea Grant Extension Program

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