



Scientists identify first likely transmissible cancer in wild catfish

Description

In 2013, catfish in Lake Memphremagog, which is between Vermont and Quebec, showed a strange problem. Some brown bullhead catfish had raised black spots. A study found that 23% to 37% of these fish had melanoma, a type of skin cancer.

Before this study, experts thought the environment might be to blame. In 2011, Tropical Storm Irene caused flooding, and some wondered if pollution made the fish sick. But the new study suggests something different: the cancer cells might spread from one catfish to another. This is the first known case of transmissible cancer in fish.

Researchers looked closely at the affected catfish. They found that the cancer DNA was very similar in many fish. This means the cancer likely came from one source and spread among them. Scientists are still exploring how this happens but think that the catfish's behaviour during spawning season might help the spread.

Lake Memphremagog is drinking water for over 175,000 people. However, scientists say there is no risk of this cancer passing to humans.

Vocabulary List:

1. **melanoma** //ˌmɛləˈnoʊmə// (noun): a dangerous skin cancer that forms dark spots
2. **transmissible** //trænˈsmɪsəbəl// (adjective): can pass from one living thing to others
3. **pollution** //pəˈluːʃən// (noun): dirty or harmful things in air or water
4. **flooding** //ˈflʌdɪŋ// (noun): when water covers land that is normally dry
5. **spawning** //ˈspɔːnɪŋ// (noun): when fish release eggs to make baby fish
6. **DNA** //ˈdiːɛnˈeɪ// (noun): molecules in cells that carry genetic information

Comprehension Questions

Multiple Choice

1. What percentage of catfish in Lake Memphremagog showed signs of melanoma?
Option: 5% to 10%



- Option: 23% to 37%
- Option: 50% to 60%
- Option: 70% to 80%

2. What event in 2011 raised concerns about pollution affecting the catfish?

- Option: Earthquake
- Option: Tropical Storm Irene
- Option: Hurricane Sandy
- Option: Winter Storm

3. What type of cancer was found in the catfish?

- Option: Lung cancer
- Option: Skin cancer
- Option: Brain cancer
- Option: Liver cancer

4. What does the study suggest about the spread of cancer among the catfish?

- Option: It is contagious
- Option: It comes from the environment
- Option: It is caused by diet
- Option: It is genetic

5. How many people depend on Lake Memphremagog for drinking water?

- Option: 100,000
- Option: 150,000
- Option: 175,000
- Option: 200,000

6. During which season do scientists believe the catfish's behavior might help the spread of cancer?

- Option: Winter
- Option: Summer
- Option: Spring
- Option: Spawning season

True-False

7. The study indicated that melanoma in catfish might be transmitted from one fish to another.



8. Prior to 2013, experts were certain that melanoma was caused by pollution.
9. Lake Memphremagog is used for drinking water by over 200,000 people.
10. The cancer found in the catfish was determined to have a similar DNA structure.
11. Scientists have confirmed the risk of cancer transmission from catfish to humans.
12. The unusual problem with catfish began in 2011.

Gap-Fill

13. In 2013, catfish in Lake Memphremagog showed a strange problem involving _____ spots.
14. Experts believed that pollution might be to blame for the sick catfish after _____ Storm Irene.
15. The study found that a percentage between 23% to 37% of fish had _____ cancer.
16. This is the first known case of _____ cancer in fish.
17. Scientists say there is no risk of this cancer passing to _____ people.
18. The cancer DNA in the affected catfish was very _____ in many fish.

Answer

Multiple Choice: 1. 23% to 37% 2. Tropical Storm Irene 3. Skin cancer 4. It is contagious 5. 175,000
6. Spawning season

True-False: 7. True 8. False 9. False 10. True 11. False 12. False

Gap-Fill: 13. black 14. Tropical 15. melanoma 16. transmissible 17. humans 18. similar

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1. Health - LEVEL1

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