# Wild Tiger Health Centre Information Sheet

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## Disease threat: Dracunculus spp.

***Hazard description***: An oviviparous nematode in the Superfamily Dracunculoidea, closely related to the Filarioidea. Commonly referred to as the Guinea worm or Medina worm in man.

***Host species:*** Indirect life cycle – intermediate hosts are copepods (freshwater crustaceans). *D. medinensis* is predominantly a parasite of humans (Foster et al. 2014), but it has reportedly been found in domestic cats and dogs (Taylor et al. 2007), and leopard (Konyaev 2012). In wildlife, *D. insignis* has been reported from north America in raccoons (Crichton & Beverley-Burton 1977), and gray fox (Davidson et al. 1992), and *D. lutrae* has been reported from otters (Crichton & Beverley-Burton 1977).

***Pathogenesis:*** The adult worms mature deep in connective tissue, then migrate to sub-cutaneous tissues nine months later, blister, then rupture on contact with water releasing L1 stages into water, to be picked up by copepods. L1-L3 development takes place, L3 are then ingested by the final host (Taylor et al. 2007). It appears unlikely to be of major clinical significance in wildlife, although skin lesions have been reported in free-ranging raccoons (Crichton & Beverley-Burton 1977), and a bacterial septicaemia secondary to skin lesions has been reported in a gray fox (Davidson et al. 1992).

***Diagnosis***: Clinical signs (skin lesions) are pathognomic.

***Free-ranging tiger occurrence:*** No reports found.

***Distribution:*** Africa, Middle East and parts of Asia (Taylor et al. 2007). Reported from leopard (Konyaev 2012), but location unknown.

***Assumptions***: Assume low pathogenicity in wild felids.

***Limitations***: Scant data.