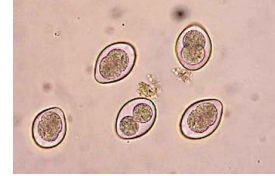




Coccidia in Cats & Dogs



Coccidia is a microscopic, single-celled organism that can infect the intestines of cats and dogs; most commonly puppies and kittens. Most cats and dogs infected with coccidiosis will have no clinical signs or symptoms. Those with severe infections, and in young or debilitated pets, the most common symptoms are watery diarrhea (may or may not contain blood), dehydration, vomiting, and abdominal pain.

Animals most commonly become infected with coccidia by ingesting the oocysts, or the immature form of the organism. Oocysts are passed in the stool of infected animals and they are able to live in the environment from weeks to months, depending on different factors such as temperature and humidity. Pets ingest the oocysts by licking/eating contaminated plants, soil, or even feces in some cases.

Diagnosing a coccidia infection is done through routine fecal parasite testing. A small sample is analyzed under a microscope and the oocysts are easily identified, if present. Puppies and kittens are the most commonly affected, but it is recommended to have a fecal test done at least once per year, no matter the age of the pet.

Since coccidia are not worms, they are not managed with traditional worming medications or preventatives, such as Heartgard, Revolution Plus, etc. This is another reason it is recommended to routinely test your pet's stool to screen for possible undetected infections. Cats and dogs with coccidiosis will be prescribed a medication called *Albon*®, which is an antibiotic that is taken typically for a series of 5 days, but it may be prescribed for longer in cases of severe infection, or re-infection. After treatment, it is recommended to test another fecal sample in 1 month. If the sample is negative and there are no clinical signs, it is to be assumed the infection is cleared. If there are clinical signs still present, or the sample comes back positive again, another round of treatment is warranted.

Re-infection is common if the oocysts are not removed from the environment, so disinfection is important.

1. Immediately pickup and discard of feces.
2. A diluted solution of 1 cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water can be used to treat bleach-safe surfaces.

***be sure to spot test surfaces, as bleach can be damaging*

3. Steam cleaning is effective in destroying oocysts.

Different types of coccidia are host-specific, meaning dogs and cats can pass coccidia between each other, but a cat cannot contract the same infection from a dog. This also means that we cannot contract coccidiosis from our pets, but it is always a good idea to maintain good hygiene when disposing of feces. It is also important to remind kids to wash their hands after playing with puppies and kittens.