

COCCIDIOSIS AND GIARDIA IN PUPPIES



Symptoms of *Coccidiosis*:

The primary sign of a pet suffering with *coccidiosis* is diarrhea. The diarrhea may be mild to severe depending on the level of infection. Blood and mucous may be present, especially in advanced cases. Severely affected animals may also vomit, lose their appetite, become dehydrated, lethargic, and in some instances, die from the disease.

Most infected puppies and kittens are in the four to twelve week age group. The possibility of *coccidiosis* should always be considered when a loose stool or diarrhea is encountered from this age group. A microscopic fecal exam by a veterinarian will detect the cysts confirming a diagnosis.

If you are the owner of a new puppy and you experience one or more of the following symptoms in your puppy please consult your vet immediatly:

Diarrhea.

Blood and mucous in the feces

Vomitting,

Lose of appetite,

Become dehydrated,

Lethargic

***Coccidiosis* and Stress:**

Stress plays a role in the development of *coccidiosis*. It is not uncommon for a seemingly healthy puppy, kitten, or other animal to arrive at its new home and develop diarrhea several days later leading to a diagnosis of coccidia. Often, *coccidian* was present only to surface during the stressful period of the puppy or kitten adjusting to a new home.

If the puppy or kitten has been at the new home for less than thirteen days then it had coccidia before it arrived. Remember the incubation period (from exposure to illness) is about thirteen days. If the puppy or kitten has been with its new owner several weeks, then the exposure to *coccidia* most likely occurred after the animal arrived at the new home.

What is *Coccidiosis*?

Coccidia are small protozoan that multiply in the intestinal tracts of dogs, puppies, cats, kittens, goats, rabbits, foals, horses, and all other animals though most commonly in kittens, puppies, kids, and young animals less than 6 months of age, but *coccidia* can also affect

adult animals whose immune system is suppressed or in animals who are stressed in other ways (i.e., change in ownership, other disease present, etc.).

Dog and cat *coccidia* are most often of the genus called *Isospora*. *Isospora canis* and *I. ohioensis* are the species most often encountered in dogs. Regardless of which species is present we generally refer to the disease as *coccidiosis*. As a puppy ages it tends to develop a natural immunity to the effects of *coccidia*. As an adult it may carry *coccidia* in its intestines, shed the cysts in the feces, but experience no ill effects.

A puppy is not born with the *coccidia* organisms in its intestine. However, once born, the puppy is frequently exposed to its mother's feces and if the mother is shedding the infective cysts in her feces then the young animals will likely ingest them and *coccidia* will develop in their intestines. Since young puppies and kittens, usually those less than six months of age, have no immunity to *coccidia*, the organisms reproduce in large numbers and parasitize the young animal's intestines. Oftentimes, this has severe effects.

From exposure to the *coccidia* in feces to the onset of the illness is about 13 days. Most puppies, kittens, and other animals who are ill from *coccidia* are, therefore, two weeks of age and older. Although most infections are the result of spread from the mother, this is not always the case. Any infected animal is contagious to other animals. In breeding facilities, shelters, animal hospitals, etc. it is wise to isolate those infected from those who are not.

What is *Giardiasis*?

Giardiasis, also known as *Giardia*, is small protozoans that can affect nearly all warm blooded beings, humans and animals. Animals or people can be affected by consuming water or food that is contaminated with giardia cysts. When *giardia* reach the gastrointestinal tract they swiftly multiply and block the intestinal absorption causing loose, mucousy stools, diarrhoea, listlessness, weight loss, dehydration, and can cause scarring in the small intestine, pancreatic insufficiency, and mal-absorption syndromes.

People can get *giardia* infections from their pets. Fecal testing is not as accurate as it should be. People and animals can test negative even when they have giardia infection, so it may take numerous fecal smears to confirm infection.

People and pets that are infected with *giardia* can get it again, so it is essential to disinfect well. Finding the source of giardia is helpful, as eliminating giardia from your home and property can be difficult as the cysts are very hardy. They can survive standard chlorination protocols for drinking water. They survive freezing down to minus 13° Celcius and in drying fecal material for long periods of time.

Risks:

Although many cases are mild it is not uncommon to see severe, bloody diarrhea result in dehydration and even death. This is most common in animals that are ill or infected with other parasites, bacteria, or viruses. *Coccidiosis* is very contagious, especially among young puppies. Entire kennels may become contaminated with puppies of many age groups simultaneously affected.

Prevention of *Coccidiosis*:

Because *coccidia* are spread by the feces of carrier animals, it is very important to practice strict sanitation. All fecal material should be removed. Housing needs to be such that food and water cannot become contaminated with feces. Clean water should be provided at all times. Most disinfectants do not work well against *coccidian*. Incineration of the feces, steam cleaning, immersion in boiling water or a 10% ammonia solution are the best methods to kill *coccidia*. *Coccidia* can withstand freezing.

Cockroaches and flies can mechanically carry *coccidia* from one place to another. Mice and other animals can ingest the *coccidia* and when killed and eaten by a cat, for instance, can infect the cat. Therefore, insect and rodent control is very important in preventing *coccidiosis*.

The *coccidia* species of dogs and cats do not infect humans.

Treatment:

Please consult your veterinarian for a program to prevent and treat *coccidiosis*.

Suggested products to treat and prevent *Coccidiosis*:

Purbac Paediatric Suspension

Baycox

Cosumix Plus

Coximed

These products are available in South Africa

Conclusion:

The above information is only to help the new puppy owner...