

Coccidiosis, Enteric

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BASIC INFORMATION

Description

Enteric coccidiosis is a worldwide intestinal disease that causes diarrhea in dogs and cats.

Causes

Several species of microscopic, single-celled, protozoan parasites cause enteric coccidiosis. The most common one to infect dogs and cats is *Isospora (Cystoisospora)*. All enteric coccidia are spread by the fecal-oral route, which means that the organisms are commonly swallowed in water or food contaminated with feces. Some infections may occur by eating tissues from infected animals. Most coccidial organisms are hardy and can persist in the environment.

Clinical Signs

Some infections cause no clinical signs, and the animal may be a silent carrier. In other animals, diarrhea (sometimes bloody), weight loss, and dehydration occur. Diarrhea is more likely in young and immune-suppressed animals.

Diagnostic Tests

Microscopic examination of feces usually reveals the organism in infected animals. Because the organisms may be shed intermittently, examination of more than one fecal sample may be necessary.

TREATMENT AND FOLLOW-UP

Treatment Options

Treatment with sulfadimethoxine is the most common therapy used in dogs and cats. Other sulfa drugs may also be effective. Supportive care, such as fluid therapy for dehydration, may also be necessary.

Follow-up Care

To prevent and control the spread of intestinal coccidiosis, overcrowding of animals must be avoided, and good hygiene should be maintained. Organisms are resistant to most disinfectants but can be killed by steam. Some commercial formulations of ammonia are effective, but they should be used only by trained, experienced people using appropriate personal protective equipment.

Removal of all organic material (dirt, feces) is important in preventing infection. Bathing affected animals during treatment helps remove fecal material containing infectious organisms. In certain kennel and cattery situations, treatment may be recommended for all animals in contact with the infected animal.

Prognosis

Prognosis for infected dogs and cats is generally good, because most respond well to therapy and recover quickly from the disease.