



COCCIDIOSIS

ABOUT THE DISEASE

Coccidia is a single-cell organism (protozoa) that causes a disease called **coccidiosis**. It is often regarded as nonpathogenic, which means it does not cause disease outright. However, these organisms are opportunistic infectors and infect patients who are already stressed, have other diseases, are malnourished, or have a weak immune system. The most common source of infection is ingestion of infected feces-contaminated materials from the environment.

Protozoal infections in canine and feline patients can be classified into two main categories:

- Enteric – Those that primarily infect the intestinal tract.
 - o These are typically cases of **coccidiosis** and giardiasis.
- Multisystemic – Those that can spread throughout the body.
 - o These are typically cases of toxoplasmosis and neosporosis.

While most animals are without symptoms, those that are affected can develop watery-mucoid diarrhea, sometimes bloody diarrhea, and may also exhibit vomiting, lethargy, weight loss, and occasionally dehydration.

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

A fresh fecal examination is the preferred choice for diagnosis. However, because patients may have this parasite present without it causing disease, having diagnosed **coccidia** in feces may not be clinically significant.

TREATMENT

Coccidia is often difficult to treat, with many patients requiring extended treatments or repeated treatments if they become re-infected from the environment.

Identifying **coccidia** in the stool of healthy animals does not necessarily warrant treatment. However, treatment may help reduce contamination of the surrounding environment.

In patients exhibiting clinical signs, several different medications exist, including Sulfadimethoxine and Trimethoprim-sulfa. Many require treatment for 1-3 weeks depending on response to treatment.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- **Coccidiosis** is often a secondary, opportunistic infection.
- Environmental stressors and heavily contaminated environments will increase risk of infection.
- Treating healthy animals does not necessarily aid the patient but may help reduce environmental contamination.