



COCCIDIOSIS

ABOUT THE DISEASE

Coccidia is a protozoan parasite that infects the intestines, causing inflammation and damage. It spreads through the fecal-oral route when animals ingest contaminated material from the environment. The infection is common in high-density settings such as shelters and breeding facilities. The organism requires 12–36 hours to become infective, so prompt removal of feces reduces transmission. Coccidia is species-specific and does not typically pass between cats, dogs, and humans.

Symptoms include:

- Watery or mucoid diarrhea that may become bloody
- Vomiting, lethargy, and loss of appetite
- Severe dehydration and secondary infections, which can be life-threatening in young puppies and kittens

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

A fresh fecal examination under a microscope is the preferred method. Low parasite numbers may produce false-negative results, in which case additional testing such as fecal PCR may be required.

TREATMENT

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

Medications include sulfadimethoxine, ponazuril, and trimethoprim-sulfa, with courses typically lasting 1–3 weeks.

Environmental management is critical: remove and dispose of feces promptly, clean bedding at least once daily, and prevent re-exposure between animals. Bedding should be cleaned 1-2x daily.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Coccidiosis is a common organism that is easily transmitted through direct and environmental exposure
- Environmental stressors and heavily contaminated environments will increase risk of infection.
- This organism can cause severe clinical disease in young animals, and can be life threatening without treatment