

Coccidia



What is coccidia?

Coccidia are microscopic parasites that can infect the intestines of cats and cause gastrointestinal problems. The infection is commonly known as coccidiosis.

What are the symptoms of coccidia?

Cats with coccidiosis may not show any symptoms but those who do can experience:

- Diarrhea
- Abdominal pain
- Loss of appetite
- Dehydration

Note: The above possible coccidia symptoms can also be symptoms of many other diseases.

If your foster animal is experiencing any of these symptoms, contact the AWL NSW vet clinic (Kemps Creek carers only) or your branch Welfare Officer (AWL NSW branch carers only) during business hours.

How is coccidia diagnosed?

A veterinarian can diagnose coccidiosis by analysing a sample of the cat's faeces and detecting the presence of the parasite.

How is coccidia spread?

Coccidia are passed from one cat to another through the faeces of infected cats. The parasite can also be spread through contaminated food, water, or litter boxes. Immunocompromised people have a small chance of being infected with coccidia so they should avoid handling infected faeces or material.

How is coccidia prevented?

1. Regular cleaning: Clean and disinfect litter boxes, feeding areas, and other areas where infected faeces may be present.
2. Hygienic feeding practices: Wash hands thoroughly before and after handling food and feeding bowls. Avoid feeding foster cats raw meat (as it could be contaminated with coccidia, cause bacterial infections or other problems).
3. Isolation: In multi-cat households, isolate known infected cats until they have been treated and are no longer contagious.
4. Good sanitation: Keep the environment clean and free of faeces and urine. Regularly clean and disinfect bedding, toys, and other items that may come into contact with infected faeces.

How long can coccidia stay in the environment?

Coccidia can survive in the environment for several weeks to several months, depending on the conditions. Factors that affect the survival of coccidia in the environment include temperature, humidity, and the presence of other microorganisms. The parasite is most likely to persist in moist and warm environments, such as soiled litter or in faeces.

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It is important to clean and disinfect contaminated areas thoroughly to reduce the risk of transmission to other cats. A solution of diluted bleach (1 part bleach to 32 parts water) or a suitable commercial disinfectant (such as F10) can be used to kill the parasite in the environment.

How is coccidiosis treated?

Coccidiosis can be treated with anti-parasitic medications prescribed by a veterinarian. In severe cases, hospitalization and supportive care may be necessary.

It is important to take any symptoms of gastrointestinal problems in cats seriously and to seek veterinary care promptly. With prompt treatment, almost all cats and kittens with coccidiosis recover fully. Prescribed medication and treatment may vary slightly between vet clinics.