

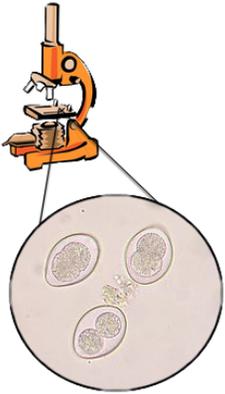
Coccidia

So you just learned that your pet has coccidia. The first thing you're probably wondering is can we get it?

And the answer is no (it's species specific so you're safe on this one). The second thing you're wondering is how to spell it so you can google it, well how about a quick and easy handout instead?

You've heard of heartworms and probably even roundworms, you may have even read on that Heartgard box that it takes care of hookworms too. But nowhere does it mention coccidia, right? Well that's because unlike

those 'worms' coccidia is a protozoa and can not be treated with the same drugs.



Coccidia is a species of *Isospora* protozoa, which infects an animal via a fecal oral route (yes that means your pet ingested feces. But give them credit they may have simply stepped in it and tried to clean it off).

Once ingested they mature and releases sporozoites that infect cells of the intestinal tract multiplying until they burst the cell and are free to infect more intestinal cells. The result is diarrhea which can become severe and bloody. Eventually the protozoa release oocysts (eggs) that exit with the stool to enter the environment where they can survive in weather ranging from -20 to over 100°F for over a year! (Now you see why we remind you to pick up after your pet). It's these microscopic oocysts that we hope not to see when we test your pet's stool samples.

Okay, biology class is over. Now you really just want to know how you get rid of them right? The go to medication is Albon which is considered a coccidiostat, meaning it stops the reproduction of the coccidia and allows the animal's immune system time to try and fight it off

Unfortunately, infections can be severe and multiple courses may be required, especially in the young, old, and immunocompromised. Recently there has been an increase in stubborn coccidia infections and the use of Ponazuril, a compounded coccidiocidal medication that can kill the protozoa has been used. But this medication can be difficult to measure and give compared to Albon, so it is not our first choice. If your dog is given either of these medications it is important that you give it for the specified amount of days and then bring in a new stool sample to be checked for those oocysts. And as always, remember to clean up after your pet!

