

TOXOPLASMOSIS

Toxoplasmosis:

Disease that can infect all species of warm-blooded animals, throughout the world, including man. It is caused by a small, one-cell organism called a “**protozoan parasite.**” It is located in the intestinal tract and sheds eggs which may pass in the stools. Publicity about this disease increased a few years ago because of the possibility of it being shed in the feces (stools) of the cat. The disease may cause congenital deformities in human infants, if a woman is infected after conception.

Most infected cats show no sign of disease. Clinical signs which sometimes occur include mucoid or bloody diarrhea, fever, pneumonia, enlarged lymph nodes, hepatitis, eye lesions, anemia, muscle inflammation, and possible seizures. Although the disease may be fatal, it usually responds to therapy. Cats then recover and develop a strong immunity against the disease.

Toxoplasmosis:

Transmitted by fecal contamination, transmitted before birth, or by eating uncooked, infected meat, such as by the ingestion of small animals, cockroaches, or birds infected with the disease. The eggs take one to five days to hatch after being produced by the adult stage of the organism.

Diagnosis is made by fecal examination and blood tests.

Cats with a high blood titer should be retested in three weeks to determine if the disease is still infectious, or if the animal has developed a strong immunity.

Treatment involves medication for a minimum of three weeks, and then re-testing the blood titer of the cat.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

- Prevent your pet's access to birds and rodents.
- Feed only cooked or processed meats and other foods.
- Empty the litter box daily.
- Pregnant women should not handle cat litter boxes, even through there is nothing to worry about as long as the litter box is emptied daily!
- Wash your hands after handling the litter box.