

ZOONOSES YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

***Zoonotic Disease* is the medical term for any disease that people can “catch” from animals.**

More than 150 diseases are transmissible to people (about 1/3 of all known diseases). Preventing them is important. **The main prevention strategy is nothing more than GOOD SANITATION.**

RABIES. Deadly to people as well as many species of animals. All dogs & cats must be vaccinated by law. Raccoons, skunks, foxes, and bats are common carriers. Rodents and rabbits are uncommon carriers. Wild animals cannot be vaccinated. There is no effective treatment for the disease. Prevention by vaccination is a must.

TOXOPLASMOSIS. A protozoan disease carried by some cats. Eggs of the parasite (oocysts) are shed in the cat's feces, and then ingested by other animals (and people) causing disease. The primary concern in people is the potential for causing birth defects. Litter boxes should be changed daily and pregnant women should not be allowed to change the litter box, even though the stools are not infective until they have remained in the litter box for 48 hours or more.

ROUNDWORMS. Toxacara canis is the scientific name for a parasite that can migrate through body tissues and eyes in children from ingesting the eggs, which can be in the soil or pet's feces. Puppies and kittens should be routinely dewormed with the appropriate drug 3 times at 2-week intervals to control this parasite.

HOOKWORMS. Larvae from the soil can migrate through the skin. Signs include itchy skin and skin rashes. It is self-limiting. The parasite affecting pets will not reproduce in humans and therefore dies out without treatment unless re-infection occurs. Routine deworming of pets eliminates the potential for soil contamination.

RINGWORM. 60% of all kittens are thought to be carriers, even though they show no clinical signs of the skin disease. It can spread to the entire family. A fungal culture is recommended for all new cats brought into a household to screen for this disease. All cases of hair loss in your cat should be presented to a veterinarian promptly for a definite diagnosis.

GIARDIA. An intestinal parasite carried by dogs and cats that may possibly be transmitted to humans. The major clinical sign is diarrhea although carriers may not show any sign of the disease. Routine internal parasite tests should be performed on all pets at least once each year. This disease is commonly present in wild animals.

CAT SCRATCH DISEASE. A bacterial infection characterized by slight fever and enlarged lymph nodes. This disease is usually self-limiting. The most common cause is a cat scratch. There is no reason to euthanize a cat that has caused this problem.

PNEUMONITIS. This disease is caused by a “Chlamydia” organism and can cause human eyelid infections (conjunctivitis). Best prevention is vaccination of the cat for the disease and good sanitation, such as washing your hands after handling a cat.

HEARTWORMS. Heartworms can cause disease in both dogs and cats, and has been reported in people. It has been confused with cancer in the lungs of humans. The heartworm has also been found in the eye of humans. All pets should be on prevention.

Other common zoonotic diseases include: Scabies, Tuberculosis, and Salmonella

The National Center for Disease Control recommends that veterinarians advise their clients of the potential risk and take measures to prevent the problem.

HUMAN WORM INFECTION RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. All pets should have an internal parasite test once a year, or more frequently if worms are seen at home.
2. Dogs should be given once-a-month heartworm prevention which also helps control intestinal parasites.
3. Pregnant women should not clean out the cat's litter box or do any gardening (working with hands in the soil) without wearing gloves.

DON'T PANIC. The incidence of pet to human worm transmission is very low. ***CAUTION, GOOD SANITATION and a PROPER DEWORMING PROGRAM*** are “the keys” to preventing zoonosis.