Characterizing Signs of *Giardia* in Cats

Investigators documented the regional prevalence of *Giardia* species cysts in the feces of cats and tried to identify factors associated with infection. Samples were voluntarily submitted by owners and veterinarians from cats of all ages, sexes, breeds, and housing circumstances. A risk factor questionnaire was completed for all samples. Samples from 250 cats from Mississippi and northwestern Alabama were included in the study. Each was analyzed by using a centrifugation-flotation technique and a commercially available immunofluorescent antibody kit. *Giardia* species cysts and *Cryptosporidium* species oocysts were identified by using a fluorescent microscope. Fecal flotation was also performed if sample size allowed. The overall prevalence of *Giardia* species cysts was 13.6%. The presence of *Cryptosporidium* species oocysts, the presence of coccidial oocysts, and a clinical history of chronic gastrointestinal signs were significantly associated with presence of *Giardia* species cysts.

**COMMENTARY:** This study found a higher prevalence of *Giardia* species than previously reported, which may reflect greater sensitivity of the testing methods or a higher infection rate in this geographic area. It is also interesting that acute diarrhea was not associated with *Giardia* species but that chronic gastrointestinal signs were.—Patricia Thomblison, DVM, MS


OTC Drugs & Pets

Small animals can be exposed to an ever-increasing number of potentially toxic drugs, many of which are over-the-counter (OTC). Although most of the drugs are fairly safe, they can cause toxicities, especially in high quantities. Veterinarians should become familiar with common toxins and have identified resources, such as poison centers, Internet resources, and toxicologists at veterinary schools. Many times pet owners aren’t even aware of the danger. For example, bismuth subsalicylate, a popular OTC medicine known as Pepto-Bismol, contains 8.7 mg of aspirin per milliliter. Owners who give the medication to their pets for diarrhea may unintentionally expose them to high levels of aspirin. Vitamins, especially fat-soluble vitamins, are also possible toxins.

**COMMENTARY:** This is an excellent review of the common OTC drugs to which companion animals may be exposed. There are lists of toxins likely to be found in many homes, including antiinflammatory drugs and antihistamines. This is a good article for clinicians to read and keep for future reference.—The Editors


Treatment Success in Feline Herpes Dermatitis

Feline herpesvirus associated ulcerative and crusting dermatitis has been reported in cats and cheetahs. In this case report, a 3-year-old Abyssinian-mix cat was initially diagnosed via skin biopsy with an eosinophilic granuloma on the muzzle. The lesion did not respond to glucocorticoid or antibiotic therapy. Reevaluation of the specimen revealed intranuclear inclusion bodies, and a presumptive diagnosis of feline herpes dermatitis was made and confirmed via polymerase chain reaction testing of a conjunctival swab. The lesion consisted of a hairless area on the lateral aspect of the muzzle with thickened skin and mild crusting. The cat was treated with recombinant interferon-Ω at a dose of 1.5 million units/kg. Half the dose was injected perilesionally and intradermally, and the remaining dose was administered subcutaneously. The lesion regressed rapidly as early as 2 days after treatment. The cat was treated again on days 2, 9, 19, 21, and 23. Two months after therapy, the lesion was markedly smaller; after 4 months, the cat had only a small crust, which was removed surgically.

**COMMENTARY:** Until this case report, there has not been a successful treatment for herpes dermatitis in cats. Currently recombinant interferon-Ω is manufactured by Virbac (www.virbaccorp.com) under the name Virbagen Omega (rFEIFN) and is used to treat feline leukemia virus. It is not licensed for use in the United States but will soon be registered for use in Canada. It has been used in Europe since 2001 to treat parvovirus infections. In 2004, its use was extended to include cats—for treatment of nonterminal cases of feline leukemia or feline immunodeficiency.—Karen A. Moriello, DVM, Diplomate ACVD