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Zoonoses:

.... diseases that can pass from your pet to you.

Infectious diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans are called zoonoses. The transmission of diseases from pets to owners happens relatively infrequently but does warrant attention and precaution, particularly in the area of hygiene and maintaining a strict regime of vaccination and anti-parasitic treatments. Infants and children are more at risk because of their immature immune systems and poor hygiene habits. Also at higher risk are pregnant women, and those with a compromised immune system such as the elderly and AIDs sufferers.

Roundworms and Hookworms

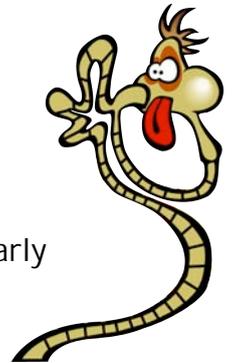
The problem: The growing popularity of dogs and cats, has resulted in widespread contamination of the soil with infective eggs and larvae from roundworms. Studies have implicated the presence of untreated dogs (particularly puppies) in a household as the principal risk factor. Children's play habits and their attraction to pets put them at higher risk for infection than adults. Pups frequently become infected by ingesting larvae while suckling from their mother, but larvae can also be passed across the placenta before birth.

Humans pick up roundworms through ingestion of infective eggs in the environment. When a human ingests infective eggs, the eggs hatch and release larvae that can migrate anywhere in the body, including eye, brain, liver, and lung. The common dog roundworm (*Toxocara canis*) has been implicated in this syndromes in children in Ireland and worldwide. The cat roundworm (*Toxocara cati*) can also cause disease but is implicated much less frequently.

Humans can also become infected with hookworms by ingestion of infective larvae or direct penetration of the skin, at which point, they migrate and can cause intense itchiness and red lesions on the skin or travel to other organs.

The answer:

- Make sure to wash your hands before and after handling your pet and never allow them to lick your face
- Observe strict hygiene when dealing with dog and cat faeces
- Never allow your dog to defecate in public places and always clear up accidents if they happen
- Cover children's sandpits when not being used (discourages toilet-ing by cats)
- Regularly and routinely worm your dogs and cats as advised by the Vet Hospital

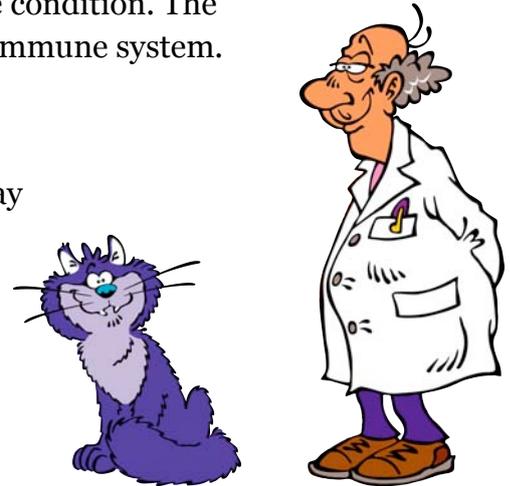


Toxoplasmosis:

The problem: Toxoplasmosis can be transmitted when a person comes into contact with an infected cat's feces, but it is also found in soil. Cats are normally infected when they hunt and catch small rodents. Undercooked meat is also common route for infection. Most people have built up immunity to toxoplasmosis but it can cause birth defects if contracted by a woman in the early stages of pregnancy. Toxoplasmosis can also cause neurological problems and damage to eyes. Those at risk include women who are pregnant or who are likely to become pregnant in the near future. Most people who become infected are not aware of any symptoms but some have flu type symptoms which can last weeks, after which time they usually become immune to the condition. The disease can be more serious for those with a compromised immune system.

The answer:

- ☑ Women at risk should avoid cleaning the cat's litter tray
- ☑ Wear gardening gloves when working in the garden.
- ☑ Care and good hygiene when handling cooked meat
- ☑ At risk women should only eat well cooked meat

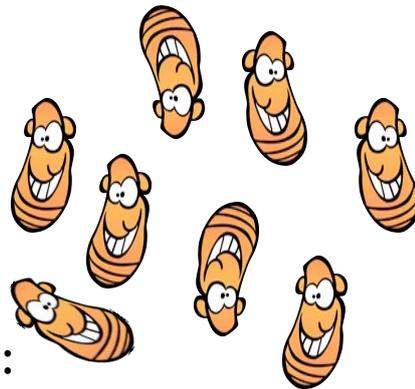


Giardia:

The problem: Giardia is an intestinal parasite which can be passed from animal to human. It is one of the most common intestinal parasite found in people and can cause diarrhea in people and animals. This disease can be transmitted between people, or from wild animals, pets or contaminated water. Symptoms may last weeks, and those infected, may be contagious for months.

The answer:

- ☑ Hygiene (as for roundworms)
- ☑ Don't allow pets to lick or drink from toilet bowl



Campylobacter:

The problem: Campylobacter infections result from the ingestion of the bacterium in food or water or the exposure to faeces (humans or animals) contaminated with the organism. Implicated hosts include dogs, cats, birds, and hamsters. Symptoms include diarrhea, abdominal pain, and fever and nausea. Puppies sometimes carry this bacteria in their faces.

The answer:

- ☑ Hygiene as for roundworms
- ☑ Don't allow pets to lick or drink from toilet bowl

Leptospirosis:

The problem: Leptospirosis is caused by a bacterium that can be transmitted to humans in the urine of an infected dog. It is more likely, however, to be contracted directly from the urine of an affected carrier rat or indirectly from contaminated water.

Leptospirosis can cause flu-like symptoms or more serious illnesses. It is spread mainly through ingestion and through contamination of cuts and abrasions with the urine.

The answer:

- ☑ Ensure you get your dog vaccinated yearly
- ☑ Discourage contact with rats
- ☑ Discourage swimming / drinking from rivers / canals where rats frequent



Ringworm:

The problem: Ringworm is a fungal infection (not a worm infestation) which can affect scalp, body, feet and nails in people. The lesions frequently appear as red-ish raised rings, which gives the condition its name. It can be transmitted by contact with the skin or hair of a wide range of animals who may or may not show signs of the condition themselves. Cats are more likely to act as carriers than dogs. Pre-adolescent children are much more likely to be affected. It can also be picked up from the soil.

The answer:

- ☑ Make sure to wash your hands before and after handling your pet
- ☑ Have any skin lesions checked out by your doctor.

Fleas bites:

The problem: Fleas are a common, tough and resilient parasite which can cause itchy lesions when they bite. Cat and dog fleas are distinctly different species but both will happily alternate between cats and dogs. They will also bite humans but can not go on to breed successfully unless they can feed from their natural host. Flea bites can be so itchy

that they can cause your pet to self-mutilate. Fleas breed extremely rapidly so it is necessary to take rapid action, treating both your pets and the environment.

The answer:

- ☑ Treatment, prevention and ongoing control using a monthly prescription 'spot-on' is safe, easy and highly effective.
- ☑ Treat the environment with flea control products (only a small part of the population of fleas will be on your pet)
- ☑ Wounds inflicted by self-mutilation need to be treated by the Vet Hospital



Scabies:

The problem: Scabies is a skin condition that appears as itchy red lesions on the skin, which are caused by tiny microscopic mites. There are different species of Sarcoptes (the mite that causes scabies) and the each species of mite tend to prefer their own host. Canine scabies will cause a transient rash in people but will not become established and breed on human skin. The affected dog can however be a continuing source of adult mites.

The answer:

- ☑ Treat the affected dog and any dogs in contact with a prescription 'spot on' for this purpose
- ☑ Consult your doctor, who will be able to provide medications to help relieve symptoms.



Cat Scratch and Cat Bites:

The problem: Bacterial disease can be spread by means of cat scratches and bites. The wounds can become red and swollen, sometimes leading to severe septic infections. The main bacteria involved in cat bites are Pasteurella multocida, Fuciforms and Streptococcus, while the organism responsible for cat scratch fever is Bartonella. Deep puncture wounds can result in these bacteria being seeded far beyond where antiseptic will be able to reach.

The answer:

- ☑ Immediately after receiving a wound, immerse the affected area in an antiseptic solution
- ☑ Consult your doctor, who will provide you with the appropriate treatments and antibiotics for the bacteria involved in this type of injury.

Bites from Pets:

The problem: Most bites from pets are caused by dogs, partly because of their popularity as pets, and partly because of the culture of very close contact which we, as a society, have with our dogs. The main danger involved in dog bites relates to the physical injury received rather than the bacteria present in a dogs mouth.

The answer:

- ☑ Bath the wound in an antiseptic solution
- ☑ Unless the injury is very mild, consult your doctor immediately
- ☑ Phone the Vet Hospital for practical advise on how to navigate through the various implications of the bite
- ☑ Avoid situations which increase the danger of conflict (eg 'crowding' a dog who is eating). Special consideration needs to be made of the way children interact with pet dogs.
- ☑ Ensure that a lot of effort is put into training from the word 'go'



Rabies:

The problem: Although Ireland has been free from rabies for many years, the very mention of the word rabies tends to strike fear into the hearer. Rabies is spread through bite wounds, or contamination of an open wound with saliva, from an animal affected by rabies. The virus affects the nervous system and will be fatal if not treated rapidly. Prevention, rather than control has been Ireland's very successful approach to rabies. Rabies has been eradicated in Ireland and the government take control measures very seriously. Vaccination of pets which travel outside of Ireland and Britain is essential and is part of the process in arranging a pet passport.

The answer:

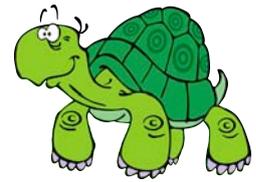
- ☑ Full co-operation with Department of Agriculture regulations concerning pet travel as detailed in the [pet passport scheme](#) (see FAQ section in the main menu under 'Can I travel abroad with my pet?' for more information)



Salmonellosis:

The problem: This bacteria can cause serious diarrhoea and vomiting in people. The source of infection is from animal faeces. Most instances of human salmonellosis arise

from contaminated food or water. Reptiles such as turtles, geckos and iguanas are a much more common source of infection than affected cats and dogs. Children, the elderly and the immunocompromised are the most susceptible to serious disease.

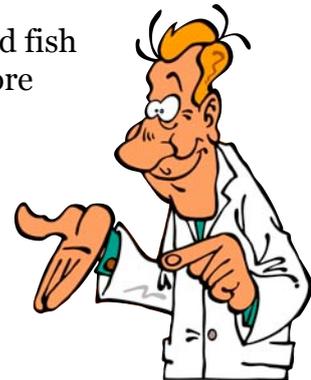


The answer:

- Make sure to wash your hands before and after handling your pet, particularly reptiles.

Mycobacterium:

The problem: Mycobacterium is a bacteria found in fish and fish tanks. It can cause swollen lymph nodes and serious illness in more susceptible people, such as children, the elderly and the immunocompromised.



The answer:

- Observe good hygiene in cleaning out aquaria