

Client Fact Sheet: Echinococcus multilocularis

Regular walks with your pet are enjoyable and a healthy habit. If your walk routinely includes parks, off-leash parks and other areas where animals mingle, your pet should be on parasite control. The tapeworm *Echinococcus multilocularis* is increasing in prevalence due to the rodents and coyotes infiltrating urban areas (ie off-leash parks, periphery of the city, etc), and has potential to be transmitted to humans, causing some very dangerous health issues.

How do pets get this infection?

1. Cats and dogs get the infection by eating infected rodents. This leads to them developing adult worms and they will pass eggs in their fecal matter
2. If cats or dogs come into contact with this tapeworm's eggs, they can develop potentially fatal liver disease.

How do humans get infected?

1. By ingesting the eggs from an infected pet's fur or other areas in the home that could have been contaminated with fecal matter. The eggs are tiny and not visible to the human eye.
2. By eating fruits and vegetables contaminated with eggs (from the soil)
3. By handling contaminated soil (ie - children playing outside, or gardening, etc, and not washing hands.

How do I prevent infection in my pet?

1. Don't allow pets to wander freely and unobserved to capture and eat small rodents or other animal's fecal matter
2. If pets are allowed off leash, discuss parasite control with your veterinarian
3. Pick up fecal matter as soon as possible both in your backyard and the park

How can I prevent infection in myself and my family?

1. Keep your pets dewormed monthly so they are not shedding the echinococcus eggs in your yard or house
2. Wash hands with soap and warm water after handling pets and before handling food
3. Teach children the importance of washing hands to prevent infection
4. Wash fruits and vegetables prior to eating them
5. Wash hands after handling soil