

ONTARIO SPCA
AND HUMANE SOCIETY

Disease Name:	Toxoplasmosis	
Agent:	Toxoplasma gondii	
Clinical Signs:	<p>Animals - Asymptomatic, recent infection may cause transient fever, diarrhea or respiratory signs, symptoms are more likely in young kittens and cats with concurrent disease. Occasionally causes chronic or more severe disease including neurological and ocular disease.</p> <p>Humans - May cause transient, flu-like symptoms and swollen lymph nodes, can cause abortion or severe congenital disease in infants when pregnant mothers are infected between the 2nd and 6th month of gestation. May cause severe disease in immunocompromised patients, including headache, seizures, cognitive impairment and partial paralysis.</p>	
Susceptible domestic species	Cats	
Zoonotic?	Yes	
Diagnostic tests:	Serology ELISA	Absence of oocysts in fecal flotation should not be used to rule out the disease.
Test sensitivity (false negatives)	Good	Yes- see above
Test specificity (false positives)	Good- serum IgM antibody titre indicates active or recent infection	
Test Comments	Cats may shed infectious oocysts before developing antibodies to toxoplasma and the vast majority of cats that are positive on serology are not shedding oocysts. Oocysts may be detected on fecal flotation although it is impossible to differentiate these from the oocysts of certain other protozoan parasites.	
Vaccine available?	No	
Vaccine efficacy	N/A	
Excreted in:	Mother's milk	
Mode of transmission:	<p>Cats are the only domestic species that shed infectious oocysts in feces. Cats may become infected through ingestion of oocysts or infected intermediate hosts such as rodents. Transmission to kittens through mother's milk is also possible. Most cats become infected in the first year of life and oocyst shedding is usually highest at the time of first infection.</p> <p>Human infection is through ingestion of intermediate stages of toxoplasma in undercooked meat. Humans may also become infected by ingestion of oocysts from soil contaminated by cat feces, usually following gardening or ingestion of raw vegetables from such soil. Transmission by the fecal-oral route after exposure to cats feces is also possible, usually when cleaning litter boxes.</p>	
Disinfection	To prevent transmission from cat feces, litter boxes should be changed and thoroughly cleaned daily with hot water and disinfectant.	
Incubation	Uncertain	
Post recovery shedding	No	

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Carrier state?	No, but most animals with toxoplasmosis are asymptomatic and will have gone through the excretion/shedding phase without clinical symptoms to alert handlers/owners.
Treatment	Clindamycin/Trimethoprim-Sulfa/Azithroycin
PPE Required	Gloves, gown
Control	As most infections are not transmitted by direct contact with cats or cat feces, the best prevention is to cook meat properly, and wear gloves when gardening. Pregnant women may consider getting tested for antibodies to toxoplasma; if negative, retesting during pregnancy to detect new infection should be discussed with primary health care practitioner.