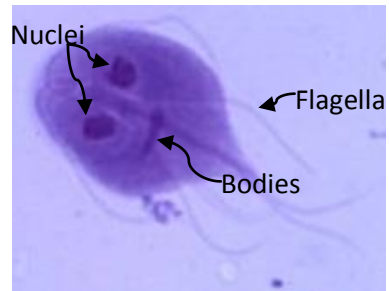


Giardia

Giardia is a common intestinal parasite that can affect both humans and animals. Contaminated water from lakes, ponds and streams is a common way pets and humans come into contact with Giardia. An appropriately chlorinated swimming pool is not usually the culprit.

Giardia can be found in two different forms, the trophozoite and the cyst. Trophozoites consist of a body and attached flagella. The flagella are whip-like structures that allow the parasite to swim. The body of a Giardia has two nuclei and a golgi body creating a very distinct face. The trophozoite form is found in the intestine of the affected animal and attach to the wall using a structure called a ventral disk that acts like a suction cup. Giardia causes a non-bloody diarrhea.



Shortly after the trophozoite leaves the body it changes shape forming a cyst that allows them to survive environmental conditions without the host to protect it. In this form Giardia can survive in the environment for several months, especially in cold wet areas. To decontaminate the area the cysts have to dry. Occasionally cysts can also be detected in fresh stool samples.

After infection it takes 5 to 12 days in dogs and 5 to 16 days in cats for Giardia to be detected in the stool. Diarrhea typically starts before the Giardia is shed in the stool. The Giardia is intermittently passed in the feces so retesting may be necessary.



Although trophozoites can sometimes be seen in a fresh stool sample when doing a direct smear the most accurate way to check for Giardia is through the use of an ELISA snap test performed on a fresh stool sample at the clinic while you wait. Repeating a snap test in two weeks is highly recommended. Treatment consists of a daily dewormer for several days. Bathing your pet is also necessary because the cysts can attach to the fur. To disinfect surfaces use bleach at a 1:32 dilution. People with compromised immune systems should practice good hygiene to prevent getting Giardia yourself if your pet has the disease.

For more information feel free to call Cedar Grove Veterinary Services at 920-668-6212 or go to www.veterinarypartner.com.