

TOXOPLASMOSIS

ZOONOSES FACTSHEET

Diseases that spread from animals to people

WHAT IS IT?

Protozoa are very small -
we cannot see them
without a microscope.

Toxoplasma gondii is a protozoa (a type of germ) that can infect animals and humans to cause sickness.

Animals can spread *Toxoplasma* as oocysts in their poo, or other cysts may be in their meat.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?



Toxoplasma can infect lots of animals including dogs, cats, rats and humans but **cats are the most important spreaders** of the disease.

Cats usually become infected by eating infected rats or birds.

People become infected by accidentally eating cysts that are shed in the poo of infected cats, especially when cleaning litter trays and not washing hands properly afterwards. People are sometimes infected by eating undercooked meat, especially if it hunted or killed at home and not bought from the shop.

WHAT DOES IT DO?

Pregnant women
are most at risk.

If you are healthy, a *Toxoplasma* infection may feel just like a bad flu. *Toxoplasma* infection is most dangerous to **pregnant women**. *Toxoplasma* infection can cause miscarriage, problems with the foetus' brain or eyes.

Cats can only spread *Toxoplasma* for a very short time when they first get it, and once they have spread the infection once, usually do not spread it again. So you would be very unlucky to be pregnant and get *Toxoplasma* from your cat in this time. But it is a serious infection, so it is best to be very careful if you are pregnant. Always ask your doctor for advice.

Infected cats or other animals usually do not show any signs.

HOW DO YOU PREVENT IT?



Protect cats from getting sick

- Feed them cat food, do not feed any offal or raw meat
- Do not let them hunt mice, rats and birds

Protect yourself from getting sick

- Be careful when touching your animals; always wash your hands with soap and water after patting animals, feeding animals or touching their bowls or toys
- Cook meat thoroughly (well-done) especially if hunted/home-killed

If you are pregnant - be very careful around your **cat** and wash your hands often. Ask someone else to clean up cat poo/clean out the litter tray for you. Clean the litter tray every day.

Wash hands regularly with soap and water to prevent *Toxoplasma* spread.



For more information: please contact AMRRIC on (08) 8948 1768, email us at info@amrric.org or visit our website: www.amrric.org

REFERENCES

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