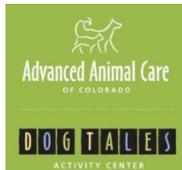


At Advanced Animal Care of Colorado and DOG TALES Activity Center we care a great deal about the health of all of the pets we care for, their owners, and the staff that handle these pets. We have seen an increased number of Giardia cases in Fort Collins and we feel a need to educate our clients regarding this disease. We have implemented a program to prevent our facility from being a host to this parasite. Please read through this information and let us know if you have any questions or concerns. If you notice soft stool or diarrhea in your pet – please notify us immediately or request your veterinarian to check your pet’s stool for this parasite. We would like to work together with all of our clients and your veterinarians to ensure the health and safety of the pets that attend AACC and DOG TALES!



Thank you,
The staff of AACC & DOG TALES Activity Center



Advanced Animal Care of Colorado and DOG TALES Giardia Protocol

- If your pet is noted to have soft stool or diarrhea in daycare, they will be pulled from daycare and you will be contacted. We require a negative Giardia Antigen test with us or your regular veterinarian (rDVM) prior to your pet being allowed back in daycare at any time. Sometimes Giardia is found in normal stool on a regular Wellness test; these positive patients will have the same treatment protocol.
- If the test is positive you will be notified and treatment will need to start. We are happy to help you with this or you may contact your rDVM for treatment of your pet. We will use Panacur, which has proven to be the most effective, occasionally adding on metronidazole and/or a probiotic depending on the severity of the diarrhea.
- Your pet should be treated for a minimum of five days. On the last day of treatment your pet should receive a bath, concentrating on the feet and hind end to remove any parasites that may be stuck on the fur and preventing recontamination from this source. If you have multiple pets, testing/treating these animals will be important to be sure the parasite is not being passed back and forth.
 - During treatment it will be very important to be diligent in cleaning up your pets’ poop to prevent recontamination from this source. As stated below in “Environmental Decontamination,” removing the parasite from your yard completely is very difficult.
- Fourteen days after the last day of treatment please bring a stool sample to AACC or your rDVM for re-testing to be sure the parasite is cleared. The test must be sent to an outside lab or be an ELISA Snap test.
 - If you choose to have your pet treated and tested at your rDVM, we will require proof of a negative test prior to your dog coming back to daycare. On a rare occasion a patient is still positive on the retest, most likely due to recontamination, and we will have to repeat the process.
- This whole process takes approximately 20 days after initial diagnosis; we apologize that we cannot allow your pet in daycare before a negative test, but it is important that we protect all of the dogs who come to play.

GIARDIA INFORMATION SHEET

Giardia is a protozoan parasite that is infectious to both humans and pets. They live in a form called a trophozoite (troph) in the intestine where it causes diarrhea. In fresh fecal samples, trophs can sometimes be captured. After a short period of time outside the host’s intestine, the trophs round up and form cysts that enable them to survive environmental conditions without a host to protect them. The cyst can be dried out to kill it, but if it is cold and wet the cyst can live for many months, ready to infect a new host. Contaminated ground water is the classical source of infection and this is commonly found in Colorado. Ingesting contaminated feces is another common way of contracting the parasite. After having been swallowed, the cyst shell is digested away, freeing the trophs, which attach to the intestinal lining. If the host has diarrhea, trophs are shed in the diarrhea, but *Giardia* may also form cysts within the host in preparation to be shed. Either form can be present in fresh/normal stool. After infection, it takes 5–12 days in dogs for *Giardia* to be found in the host’s stool in the colon on a routine fecal exam/float, but diarrhea can precede the shedding of the *Giardia*.

Diagnosis

In the past, diagnosis was difficult. The stool sample being examined needed to be fresh, plus *Giardia* rarely show up on the usual fecal floatation testing methods used to detect other parasites. What has made *Giardia* testing infinitely easier is the development of a commercial test kit that is called a Giardia Antigen test (ELISA Snap) which tests immunologically for *Giardia* proteins. This method has dramatically improved the ability to detect *Giardia* infections and has enabled us to realize how common these infections are in Colorado. This test is not dependent on finding trophs in the stool and can detect carriers of the disease even if they are not currently shedding cysts or trophs.

Treatment

Because cysts can stick to the fur of the infected patient and be a source for re-infection, the pet should receive a bath on the last day of treatment to insure that they don't re-infect themselves by licking their fur.

A broad-spectrum dewormer called [fenbendazole](#) (Panacur®) seems to be the most reliable treatment at this time with a 99% efficacy rate and is very safe for the pet. We administer this for 5 days unless this is a recurrent infection, which we would treat for 9 days.

[Metronidazole](#) (Flagyl®) in relatively high doses has been a classical treatment for *Giardia* but studies show it to only be effective in 67% of cases and can result in neurologic side effects or an upset stomach. We do not use this drug as the primary treatment at AACC due to its low efficacy. It may be given to treat secondary diarrhea depending on the severity.

Not all patients with *Giardia* actually have diarrhea, but because *Giardia* is the most common intestinal parasite affecting humans in North America, treatment is generally recommended for the pet testing positive even if no symptoms are being shown. The idea is to reduce human exposure as well as prevent intermittent shedding of *Giardia* to other patients.

What about a Vaccine?

A *Giardia* vaccine made by Fort Dodge Animal Health is on the market but it is not intended to prevent infection in the vaccinated animal. Instead the vaccine is licensed as an adjunct to treatment and is used to reduce the shedding of cysts. The 2006 American Animal Hospital Association Guidelines list this vaccine as "not recommended." We do not feel that this vaccination is necessary or effective and do not recommend its use at Advanced Animal Care of Colorado.

Environmental Decontamination

The most readily available effective disinfectant is bleach diluted 1:32 in water, which in one study required less than one minute of contact to kill *Giardia* cysts. Organic matter such as dirt or stool is protective to the cyst; so on a concrete surface basic cleaning should be done prior to disinfection. Animals should be thoroughly bathed before being reintroduced into a "clean" area. A properly chlorinated swimming pool should not be able to become contaminated. As for areas with lawn or plants, decontamination will not be possible without killing the plants and allowing the area to dry out in direct sunlight.

Human Transmission

Most people become infected with *Giardia* by drinking contaminated water, which typically is tap water from a contaminated lake or stream. If an infected animal is in the home, it is important for the animal to be bathed at the completion of treatment and retested to minimize the potential for re-infection of the pet and of the humans in the house. Good hygiene, such as washing one's hands after handling the infected pet or its waste, and prompt disposal of feces, is especially important in this situation.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at 970-493-3333.