

GIARDIASIS

ZONOSSES FACTSHEET

Diseases that spread from animals to people

WHAT IS IT?

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

Giardia is a protozoa (a type of germ) that can infect animals and humans to cause sickness. When it is not living in an animal or human, it can survive as *cysts* in the environment. The cysts can survive much longer in warm, humid places than in cool, dry places.

The cysts are dormant in the environment, then, once they get into an animal or a human, they hatch, start to grow and multiply to make you sick.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Commonly spread by **drinking dirty water.**

Giardia cysts wait in the environment to be ingested (eaten) so they can grow in the gut. More cysts then are spread in the faeces of the infected animal or human back into the environment.

Giardia cysts are most commonly found in places where faeces gets into water, like small lakes, dams or puddles in the street. Dogs that drink the water can get sick. Dogs can also get sick from eating rubbish, especially nappies. People can get sick from drinking dirty water, or if they touch infected dogs or faeces and then touch their food or their face.

WHAT DOES IT DO?

Most common sign: **diarrhoea**

Giardia causes gut upsets; often causing pale, mucous-like diarrhoea. Vomiting is rare. People and animals can be infected with a few Giardia and not get sick; you are more likely to get sick if you are young, old, pregnant or already sick. Giardia infects lots of different animals including horses, bullocky, cats, kangaroos, wildlife and others.

Antibiotics don't work well on Giardia, so prevention is better than treatment.

HOW DO YOU TREAT IT?



Protect animals from getting sick

- Stop animals drinking dirty water
- Stop animals eating rubbish, especially dirty nappies
- Keep your dogs and cats away from wildlife and other wild animals

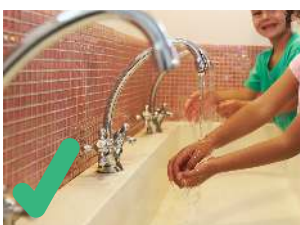


Protect yourself from getting sick

- Don't drink dirty water
- Dispose of rubbish in bins
- 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

Wash hands regularly with soap and water to prevent Giardia spread.

If you think you have Giardia, visit a doctor.



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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Phelan, S., 2010, Dog Health Programs in Indigenous Communities – an Environmental Health Practitioner's Guide, AMRRIC.
<https://www.amrric.org/resources/ehp-manual/>

Image 1: Dogs drinking ground water from a puddle, photo courtesy of AMRRIC; Image 2: A dog rummaging in spilled rubbish, photo courtesy of AMRRIC. Other images are stock photos.