



Facts about *Tritrichomonas foetus*

What is *Tritrichomonas foetus* (*T. foetus*)?

T. foetus is a parasite that lives in the lower intestine and colon of infected cats. It is most commonly found in cats who have lived outdoors near cattle or dairy farms and in environments where there are a lot of cats.

What are the signs and symptoms of *T. foetus*?

The signs and symptoms of *T. foetus* vary depending on how well a cat's immune system is at fighting and controlling the parasite. Some cats show no symptoms at all unless stressed, but most cats have on-going or recurrent diarrhea that may contain blood or mucus and generally has a strong odor. Affected cats generally don't act sick or lose weight, though they can become dehydrated and develop secondary skin infections if not cared for properly.

How is *T. foetus* transmitted?

Transmission occurs when a cat ingests feces from an infected cat that is shedding the parasite. This occurs when cats live in a crowded environment with poor sanitation, when cats share a litter box or step in fecal messes and groom themselves afterward, or when cats groom feces off of an infected cat.

There is no evidence that *T. foetus* can be transmitted to people, dogs, or animals other than cats and cattle.

Treatment and Management

- Unfortunately, there is no immediate cure for *T. foetus*. Initial treatment with an anti-parasitic drug called ronidazole can reduce symptom severity in some cats, but the cat's body has to clear the infection in its own time. This can take up to two years after diagnosis.
 - Even cats who are showing no symptoms after treatment can shed the parasite and spread the infection. For this reason, it is recommended that cats who have been diagnosed with *T. foetus* not share litter boxes with other cats, not be housed near
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cats with suppressed immune systems, and be isolated from other cats if they are not able to contain their feces to a litter box.

- T. foetus persists in the environment and is resistant to most disinfectants, though accelerated hydrogen peroxide has shown promising results.
- T. foetus-infected cats should remain indoors to protect them from other intestinal parasites and to prevent the spread of T. foetus among other cats in the community.
- Regular trips to the veterinarian for check-ups and supportive therapies can help a cat with T. foetus feel well while their body works to clear the infection.

Adapted by Dr. Lisa Mekka from website content from Clinician's Brief contributed by Dr. Indu Mani, Dr. Emily Gould, and Dr. M. Katherine Tolbert