

Encephalitozoon cuniculi infection in cats: European guidelines from the ABCD on prevention and management.

Title: Encephalitozoon cuniculi infection in cats: European guidelines from the ABCD on prevention and management.

Publication year: 2020

Journal: Journal of feline medicine and surgery

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Society: American Thoracic Society

Origin country: United States

Target countries: United States

DOI: 10.1177/1098612X20941787

PMID: 33100172

Source: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33100172/>

J Feline Med Surg J Feline Med Surg 4524 jfms 100897329 JFM Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery 1098-612X 1532-2750 SAGE Publications PMC10814217 PMC10814217.1 10814217 10814217 33100172 10.1177/1098612X20941787 10.1177_1098612X20941787 1 Clinical Reviews Encephalitozoon cuniculi infection in cats: European guidelines from the ABCD on prevention and management Addie Diane D Tasker Séverine Boucraut-Baralon Corine Belák Sandor Egberink Herman Frymus Tadeusz Hartmann Katrin Hofmann-Lehmann Regina Marsilio Fulvio Lloret Albert Pennisi Maria Grazia Thiry Etienne Truyen Uwe Hosie Margaret J Möstl Karin European Advisory Board on Cat Diseases www.abcdcatsvets.org Diane Addie Email: draddie@catvirus.com The authors do not have any potential conflicts of interest to declare.

25 10 2020 11 2020 22 11 454261 1084 1088 01 11 2020 10 06 2024 11 06 2024 © The Author(s) 2020 2020 International Society of Feline Medicine and American Association of Feline Practitioners Overview: Encephalitozoon cuniculi is a common obligate intracellular microsporidian parasite of rabbits that is increasingly recognised as a pathogen of cats and other mammalian species. These guidelines aim to review the literature on feline E cuniculi infection and provide recommendations on prevention and management.

E cuniculi infection should be considered as a differential diagnosis in cases of feline uveitis and cataract formation. It is not significantly associated with either chronic kidney disease or meningoencephalitis. E cuniculi infection is more common in stray or feral cats than in pet cats.

Serological tests for antibody detection in the blood are easy to perform and can be useful for diagnosis, but their specificity is low as antibodies have been found in apparently healthy cats. PCR appears to be more sensitive than histopathology for diagnosis, and is more sensitive when performed on cataractous lenses compared with aqueous humour, although ease of sampling is an obvious limitation. Treatment is with fenbendazole for 3 weeks and phacoemulsification to remove microsporidia from cataractous lenses.

E cuniculi is a potential zoonotic agent, and there is a particular risk to immunocompromised humans posed by infected rabbits. Albeit infrequent, spore shedding has been identified in cats, so care should be taken around infected cats.