

Toxoplasmosis PDF (2)

People who dislike cats often refer to how cats are a health hazard in respect of spreading and transmitting toxoplasmosis to people because cats are the only animal that passes the infectious stage of this parasite through their faeces. Toxoplasmosis is caused by a parasite that lives inside the cells of another organism.

These people tend to subtly manipulate the information to create a bias against the cat, particularly feral cats. They use the disease as a reason to kill feral cats.

I would like to present some hard information from the best sources on this emotional subject. I'll do this in a series of statements followed by the source of the information.

1. It is wrong to make the assumption that pregnant women should not keep cats. If you are a pregnant woman you do not have to get rid of your cat(s). Pregnant women can be tested to see if they have had exposure to toxoplasmosis. If they have been exposed they will have developed antibodies and will have acquired immunity. In which case there is no risk. Pregnant women can also take precautions to make sure that they avoid contact with cat's faeces – common sense applies. Avoid contact with soil, when gardening, that might be infected. (Cat Owner's Home Veterinary Handbook "COVH" pages 68-69)

2. "The majority of human cases – by a wide margin – come from eating raw or undercooked meat (lamb and pork) (COVH page 68). People who dislike cats often overlook this important fact. I cannot find actual statistics – i.e. percentages but "a wide margin" must indicate that over 75% of cases are nothing to do with cats. Meats should be properly cooked, obviously.

3. Numerous surveys have established that people who keep cats are “not themselves at a higher risk of acquiring infection”.

(<http://www.manhattancats.com/Articles/toxoplasmosis.html>).

4. 45% of stray cats and 47% of domestic cats in Iowa and Kansas, USA, indicated that they had been infected. This is one survey ([Toxoplasmosis and Its Prevention in Cats and People](#)). However, even an infected cat will only shed oocysts (eggs) in his or her faeces for a short time of about ten days after being exposed to the disease. After this period there is “no further significant shedding” and no risk to people (www.manhattancats.com).

5. A large number of cats in the USA are full time indoor cats. These cats will not become infected because they do not hunt. This further reduces risk to humans.

6. The incidence of toxoplasmosis in humans has not apparently changed significantly over many years yet it is agreed that the feral cat population has climbed over these years (Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine). This indicates a lack of correlation between feral cats and the transmission of the parasite to humans.

7. It is thought that up to 50% of the world’s human population has been infected. The parasite is in the cyst form in these individuals. The disease is “clinically inapparent” – asymptomatic (Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine). About 30% of the people of the United States have toxoplasmosis antibodies indicating exposure to the disease. The vast majority show no symptoms (www.manhattancats.com).

8. People with a weakened immune system can then show symptoms of disease.

9. 0.03% of babies born in the USA have symptoms of toxoplasmosis but these are mostly mild. However, very rarely, the effect can be serious.

10. Toxoplasmosis in cats is usually asymptomatic. The symptoms are: loss of appetite, lethargy, cough, rapid breathing, fever. Cats that show symptoms are often

ill with another disease that compromises their immune system such as [FIV](#) and [FeLV](#).

Personally I have never given a thought to contracting this disease but it seems that I have an almost 50% chance of carrying it without knowing about it. Commercially available test for antibodies can be used to check if we have been exposed to the disease. There are other diseases such as Chlamydia (bacterial infection) that are carried by a large section of society (10% adolescent girls) without knowing about it (). We should keep a balanced approach towards the subject of toxoplasmosis and cats.