



*Protecting and enhancing the lives of lost,
unwanted and homeless animals.*

Campylobacter

General Information

Campylobacteriosis is an infectious disease caused by bacteria of the genus *Campylobacter*. Infection is most common in puppies and kittens, but *Campylobacter spp.* can also be isolated from clinically normal adult dogs and cats (up to 30%), as well.

Campylobacteriosis is a zoonotic (transmittable from animal to human or human to animal) disease. Transmission from infected animals occurs through fecal-oral route. Humans contract the disease by ingestion or direct contact with infected material (usually feces). *Campylobacter* is one of the most common bacterial causes of diarrheal illness. Most human illness is caused by one species, called *Campylobacter jejuni*, but 1% of human *Campylobacter* cases are caused by other species.

Recognition of Campylobacter infection

Clinical signs of ileocolitis/gastroenteritis are most common in puppies and kittens <6 months of age:

- DIARRHEA (often watery to bloody with mucus and sometimes bile-stained) lasting 5-15 days
- Many infected dogs and cats show no signs
- Other signs such as vomiting, anorexia and fever are uncommon.

Campylobacteriosis should be diagnosed by way of a fecal culture of fresh feces.

For humans, it produces an enteritis lasting 1-7+ days, characterized by fever and malaise that progresses to varying degrees of diarrhea and abdominal pain (even pseudo-appendicitis). Some persons who are infected with *Campylobacter* don't have any symptoms at all.

General Policy

Campylobacteriosis in the shelter is considered a treatable condition. Fecal samples from animals suspected of having campylobacteriosis should be taken to veterinary clinic for testing as soon as possible. For the protection of the public and the other animals in the shelter, an animal diagnosed with campylobacteriosis must be immediately isolated.

Prevention

- all feces should be picked up/scooped immediately after being deposited.
- all cages and runs should be cleaned with bleach or Quatsyl-D daily
- Dog walkers must pick up all feces and not allow dogs to sniff other feces
- Staff, volunteers and visitors should wash their hands before and after handling an animal

Initial Response

Animal Placement

Place animal(s) in isolation and follow the isolation protocol (see *Shelter Cleaning and Safety Precautions*). Document the transfer of the animal to isolation in the animal's file and record all symptoms and veterinary advice received.

Treatment

Erythromycin or chloramphenicol for 7 (to 28) days (treat only as prescribed by the veterinarian)

Cleaning and disinfecting

Survival Time: The bacterium is fragile. It grows best at 42 degrees Celsius and low oxygen conditions (less than the atmospheric amount), an adaptation to its normal habitat, the intestines of a warm-blooded birds and mammals. It cannot tolerate drying and is sensitive to freezing, but it will grow on feces or food left at room temperature. The organism can survive in the environment for 3 days or more.

Cages, runs and play areas must be cleaned a minimum of twice daily. Feces should be picked up immediately after they are deposited. Either bleach or Quatsyl-D are effective against *campylobacter spp.*, however a cage, run or play area should be disinfected with dilute bleach after being vacated by the infected animal and prior to be occupied by an uninfected animal.

Wear gloves and wash hands after handling infected puppies or kittens and their feces.
Wear gloves and wash hands after handling an infected adult's feces.

Public Safety

The public should not be permitted to handle infected animals due to the risk of transmission to humans. Signs must be posted on the shelter's general entrance warning that a known campylobacter infection exists in the shelter. Additionally, a warning sign must be posted on the entrance to the cage, room, or run area where infected animals are being held.

Monitoring and Recovery (including documentation)

Clinical signs, diagnosis and treatments prescribed must be noted in the animal's file. Staff must also record the placement of the animal and keep detailed records on the animal's process of recovery.

Renewed shedding after completion of the course of antibiotics is possible, hence the importance of follow-up fecal cultures.

The prognosis is good for infected dogs and cats even though they may remain carriers. The clinical course of disease is 1-3 weeks (generally closer to 1 week). Signs of campylobacteriosis in dogs and cats may be exacerbated by stress.

Virtually all persons infected with *Campylobacter* will recover without any specific treatment. Patients should drink plenty of fluids as long as the diarrhea lasts. In more severe cases, antibiotics such as erythromycin or a fluoroquinolone can be used, and can shorten the duration of symptoms if they are given early in the illness. Your doctor will make the decision about whether antibiotics are necessary. Most people who get campylobacteriosis recover completely within 2 to 5 days, although sometimes recovery can take up to 10 days.