



THE WINN FELINE FOUNDATION

For the Health and Well-Being of Cats

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30th Annual Feline Symposium

Those Frustrating Kitten Diarrheas

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Synopsis

Diarrhea is one of the most common disease syndromes in kittens. The etiology of diarrhea can be of different origins however, infectious agents, including parasites, bacteria and viruses, are most common. These agents can cause a wide variety of gastrointestinal signs ranging from mild to life-threatening diarrhea. The purpose of this lecture is to provide practicing veterinarians and other cat interested people with an update on the clinical management of diarrhea in kittens. The most common protozoan parasites affecting kittens are *Tritrichomonas foetus*, *Cryptosporidium* spp. and *Giardia* spp. Our knowledge of these infections has changed significantly in the last several years as the ability to genetically characterize the organisms has advanced. There has also been progress in the diagnosis and treatment of these infections. Other parasites associated with gastrointestinal signs of disease include *Isospora rivolta* and *I. felis*. Roundworms including *Toxocara cati* and *Toxascaris leonina* are also common parasites in kittens but are most commonly associated with vomiting. *Ancylostoma tubaeforme*, *A. braziliense*, and *Uncinaria stenocephala* infect kittens and can cause diarrhea as well as severe anemia. Because of these common parasites, performance of microscopic examination after fecal flotation in kittens with diarrhea is an imperative test. *Salmonella* spp., *Clostridium* spp., and *Campylobacter* spp. are the most common enteric bacteria associated with kitten diarrhea and will be briefly reviewed. However, it can be difficult to determine whether a specific bacterium caused diarrhea because many of these organisms can be harbored by healthy kittens as well. Viral enteritis in kittens is most commonly associated with parvoviruses (in particularly feline panleukopenia) and coronaviruses and there have been recent advances in the diagnosis of these agents.