

FROM THE DESK AT DR SARFATY  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS  
ON THE SUBJECT OF GIARDIA

### **WHAT IS GIARDIA AND WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT??**

Giardiasis is caused by a waterborne protozoal parasite which is found in both drinking and recreational water. It is considered a ZOOONOTIC disease because humans can become infected from dogs as well as other animals. Giardiasis is transmitted from cysts which are excreted in the feces, especially diarrheic feces. Individuals can become infected by accidentally swallowing food or water contaminated with the feces of another person or animal that is infected with giardia. It is important to understand that infected individuals with symptoms or without symptoms can excrete the infective cysts.

The most common clinical signs are diarrhea, flatulence, bloating, nausea and fatigue. Weight loss or dehydration can also occur. The illness usually lasts for 1-2 weeks, but chronic infections can last for many months. Although many infections resolve spontaneously and may not require treatment, untreated pets can be carriers who transmit the disease to others.

Giardia can be diagnosed by direct microscopic observation of the feces. It is most accurately diagnosed by detecting antigen in the blood or in the stool ( Elisa Test) or by finding cysts in the stool (zinc sulfate centrifugation method.) Since infected animals do not always shed cysts in each stool, it is recommended that 3 stools be tested consecutively. Because such testing can be costly and not always definitive, veterinarians may choose to treat the typical symptoms with one or two effective medications which eliminate the parasite.

Although Giardia is found worldwide, it is more prevalent in kennels, crowded cities, and suburban neighborhoods. Because safe play is our primary goal at B & B and because Giardiasis is a public health concern, we follow three fundamental principles: treat all positive dogs, use every precaution to prevent re-introduction of the disease, and institute aggressive decontamination measures.

We strongly urge that all dogs who have tested positive for Giardia in the past year, in addition to receiving treatment, be vaccinated with Gardiavax. This will provide clinical protection against diarrhea and greatly reduce cyst shedding. PLEASE CONTACT CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR MORE DETAILS.

If you are informed by our staff that your dog has diarrhea, be sure to consult with Dr. Sarfaty about fecal testing at B & B or a veterinary hospital. Frequent testing would be more likely to expose Giardia infected dogs and carriers. If your dog is diagnosed with Giardia, please be sure to notify Customer Service so that we can take appropriate measures to review our protocol with you, cleanse infected areas promptly and thoroughly, and determine your pet's SAFE RETURN date.

