

The Latest Scoop on Poop
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Ok, I realize this topic may not be your first choice for some light reading in the Neighbor to Neighbor, but based on the positive feedback I received about the article I wrote about anal glands, I thought most of you could handle it.

Dr Nowak and I went to an educational meeting in Maine back in September and one of the topics was vomiting and diarrhea. We learned many things, and I thought I would share some of the key points.

The first is that the most accurate way to check an animals stool for parasites is to send it to the lab for a very sensitive test, rather than the method we have traditionally run in the hospital. Therefore, we have decided to send out most of the samples and get results the next day. If for some reason we want immediate results, we can still run the traditional test in house. Every animal should have a fecal checked at least once a year. Even indoor cats can be exposed to parasites by hunting in the house, and one study even showed that 15% of potting soil had hookworm eggs.

The other benefit to sending the samples to the lab is that we can have them checked for Giardia at the same time. Giardia is a tiny parasite which usually lives in contaminated water and can cause profuse diarrhea. Giardia is zoonotic, which means it can pass between animals and humans, so it is a good idea to have your pets checked annually. The Giardia organism is so small it is often missed on a routine fecal test; however, there is a new more sensitive SNAP test which detects even a small amount of Giardia with only a small amount of stool. Dr Nowak and I also learned the latest treatment options if your pet should come up positive. There is a vaccine available for dogs against Giardia, but most current research suggests that it is not an effective method to either treat or prevent the disease. Therefore, we are currently recommending annual screening rather than vaccination.

Another helpful hint I picked up was regarding dogs and cats that get diarrhea when they get boarded. This diarrhea is often stress related, and can be helped by some healthy bacteria in the gut. In the past I would have recommend yogurt, but recent research shows that probiotics available from your veterinarian work even better. If you start your pet a few days before boarding and continue for a few days after they get home you can often avoid a messy reunion.