

Surveillance for gastrointestinal parasites in hunting dogs from Pennsylvania

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Study Overview:

Wildlife commonly serves as a reservoir for a wide diversity of parasites that can negatively impact human and animal health. Gastrointestinal parasitism in wildlife is commonly asymptomatic, and transmission often involves the fecal-oral route through the environment. Consequently, hunting dogs represent a unique category of working dogs that are at increased risk of gastrointestinal parasitism due to frequent exposures to wildlife and associated habitats. In addition, hunting dogs have extensive interactions with their owners and can serve as bridge hosts to facilitate parasite transmission to humans. To date, there is limited data on gastrointestinal parasitism in hunting dogs. The purpose of this research is to test hunting dogs for infection with gastrointestinal parasites using a commercially available test that can detect 20 gastrointestinal parasites, many of which can cause disease in dogs and/or humans.

Owner Involvement:

We ask that you collect a fecal sample from your dog immediately after it has a bowel movement. Collect the sample into a sealable Ziplock container and provide it to the researcher within 24 hours. We also request that you fill out a questionnaire asking about your dog's hunting/training activities over the previous year, the occurrence of any abnormal clinical signs (particularly relating to the gastrointestinal tract), and recent diagnostic/treatment history for gastrointestinal parasites.

Reporting of results:

You will be notified of the gastrointestinal parasite test results via a phone call and/or email as soon as they are available. This will typically take less than 5 weeks from collection. You will receive test results for the 20 gastrointestinal parasites, an algorithm to assist in interpreting the test results and determining whether treatment is necessary, educational resources for any parasites that are identified in a sample, and a recommendation to discuss the test results with your veterinarian.

Deliverables:

The results of this study will provide valuable data on gastrointestinal parasite infections in hunting dogs from Pennsylvania. Such information will facilitate communication between owners and their veterinarian. We hope that this data may potentially improve prevention and treatment options for parasitic diseases of hunting dogs. As many of these parasites are zoonotic and/or transmissible to other domestic animals, these data also have applications to improving the health of non-canid animals and humans.