



# Parasite Forecast

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Issue 13

Spring 2020

# Welcome

Welcome to the ESCCAP UK & Ireland quarterly newsletter. The spring has seen events overtaken by the public health crisis that is COVID-19 and many of us will be self-isolating and coping with the health, financial and social implications it brings. ESCCAP continues to function through the outbreak and for the first time, our AGM has been held by teleconference rather than in person.

Vets, like many animal health care workers are facing the task of maintaining animal health and preventing suffering while keeping our workforce safe from the virus and not endangering human health. My own staff have performed admirably in that task so far and we continue to give the best preventative healthcare advice that we can. This is performed remotely where possible and with practical hygiene control measures to limit the spread of infection in cases where a visit to the surgery is required.

Routine parasite control remains a vital part of maintaining animal health and ESCCAP UK & Ireland continues to help disseminate the latest evidence based parasite control advice by e-mail, phone, website and CPD platforms to keep pets healthy and guard against zoonotic risk. Self-isolation may provide an opportunity to catch up on the latest parasite information and we are here to help!

Parasite Forecast aims to keep veterinary practices, industry and academia up to date with ESCCAP UK & Ireland news and activities. We welcome any feedback, including any suggestions for future topics or case studies to cover. Please email [info@esccapuk.org.uk](mailto:info@esccapuk.org.uk).

To sign up to future editions of Parasite Forecast, please visit: [www.esccapuk.org.uk/newsletter/subscribe/](http://www.esccapuk.org.uk/newsletter/subscribe/)

Each edition will also be published on the ESCCAP UK & Ireland website: [www.esccapuk.org.uk](http://www.esccapuk.org.uk)

To your parasite control success!

 Ian Wright  
Head of ESCCAP UK & Ireland



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Issue 13 / Spring 2020

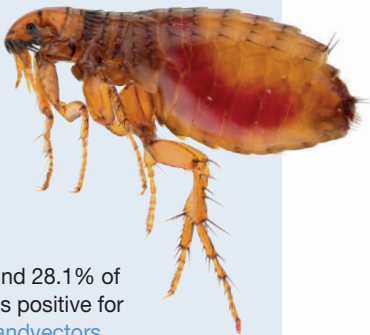
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## Spring 2020 Parasite Forecast

### Fleas

The mild winter will have helped to maintain high background flea populations.



The big flea project found 28.1% of cats and 14.4% of dogs positive for fleas. <https://parasitesandvectors.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13071-019-3326-x>. 11.3% of these infested pets were found to be harbouring fleas infected with Bartonella. An infected population of this size puts the UK pet owning population at significant risk of exposure to this zoonotic pathogen, making routine flea control essential for all domestic cats and dogs.

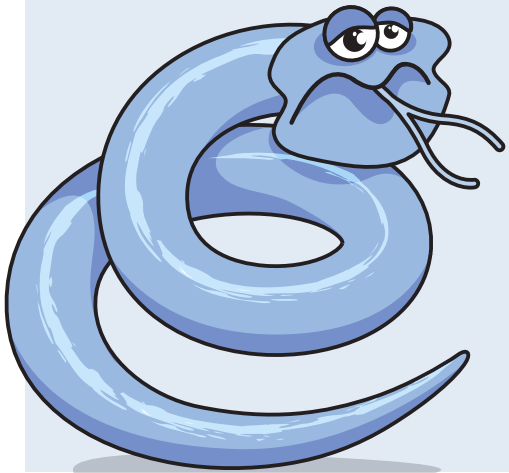
Veterinary professionals should continue to advise routine year-round preventative treatment to prevent house infestations.

### Lungworm

An outbreak of *Filaroides (Oslerus) osleri* has been reported in a greyhound kennel in Yorkshire.

Infected dogs had been presenting with a dry cough and the distinctive larvae confirmed by Baermann. In damp or multi dog environments where infective larvae can build up, this parasite is an important differential in the coughing dog. Baermann testing of faeces remains very useful in potentially diagnosing a range of canine lungworms in dogs with relevant clinical signs.

The warm and humid weather is likely to support continuing slug and snail activity. Veterinary professionals should therefore continue to be vigilant for cases of *Angiostrongylus vasorum* in their area and advise preventative treatment for high risk dogs (previously infected dogs, those dogs living in close proximity to other cases, those ingesting slugs, snails, grass and amphibians and those that are coprophagic).



### Tick-borne disease

Tick-borne encephalitis virus has now established in the UK.

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-50206382](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-50206382)  
While pets and their owners should continue to enjoy the beautiful New and Thetford forests where there is evidence for establishment, the need for effective tick prevention has never been more important for those pets and people working there and using the areas for regular recreational activity.



Further recently published data continues to support the view that the current UK climate allows questing and feeding of *Ixodes* spp. ticks all year round. ( <http://veterinaryrecord.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/vr.104649> ).

The continued humid wet weather will increase the range and number of active ticks. Checking for and removing ticks within 24 hours and using an effective product that will rapidly kill or repel ticks, will greatly reduce the risk of transmission for pets and owners walking in high risk areas such as outdoor areas with tall grass, bracken and those shared with deer or ruminants.

Pets with a previous history of tick exposure should also be treated as it is likely their lifestyle will expose them to ticks again in the future. A recent study has supported an association between Lyme positive positive dogs and human exposure, but because of shared environmental exposure <https://geospatialhealth.net/index.php/gh/article/view/750>.

Positive dogs are therefore sentinels for human infection and owners of positive dogs should be aware of the possibility that they may also have been exposed.

### *Toxocara canis*

There remains no current data on the prevalence or incidence of human toxocarosis in the UK.

Recorded prevalence of patent infection in untreated UK adult cats and dogs however, continues to be high (5% dogs, 26% cats, most recent figures from Lancashire, 6% dogs, 32% cats most recent figures from Ireland). Due to the zoonotic risk this represents, and the potential for all cats and dogs to be infected, ESCCAP UK & Ireland continues to advise all UK cats and dogs are treated at least every three months to reduce egg shedding and high risk groups (those cats and dogs on raw unprocessed diets, those that hunt, those living with children or immune compromised adults) should be treated monthly.

### *Echinococcus granulosus*

Work carried out on behalf of the Welsh Government and FSA offal condemnation figures both demonstrate that the incidence of *Echinococcus granulosus* is much more widespread in Britain than previously thought.

Post-mortem inspections in abattoirs across Britain have produced positive cases with a particularly high incidence on the Welsh border and North Midlands. HyData UK is a 3-year (2016-2018) multi-centre collaborative study investigating the national distribution of *E. granulosus* in high-risk dog populations (hunting hounds, farm dogs and pet dogs in rural areas), livestock (cattle, sheep) and horses at slaughter in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Using a molecular epidemiological approach and GIS methodology, the study aims to build the most comprehensive picture of *E. granulosus* geographic distribution in the UK and explore associated risk factors for animal and human infection. Until these results become available, prevention advice to pet owners must be based on lifestyle risk of the pet, including:

1. Monthly treatment with praziquantel of all dogs in known hydatid endemic areas unless kept on leads and fed cooked diets.
2. Monthly treatment with praziquantel for any dogs outside these areas shedding *Taenia* spp. tapeworm segments (the risk factors for *Taenia* spp. and *E. granulosus* infection are broadly the same), fed raw offal/unprocessed raw diets or have access to fallen livestock.
3. At least 4 times a year praziquantel treatment for dogs in non endemic areas that are out of sight off lead with potential pasture access.
4. Promotion of anti dog fouling, keeping dogs on leads around farms and livestock, and promotion of adequately frozen or cooked diets.





## ESCCAP UK & Ireland give faecal testing advice through social media channels

ESCCAP UK & Ireland has been giving advice to a number of social media groups regarding routine faecal flotation as a substitute for preventative treatments in cats and dogs.

We recommend routine testing for worm burdens in cats and dogs but very much alongside routine deworming rather than as a substitute for it unless it is carried out very frequently (4-12 times a year). Testing alongside treatment provides great value for clients and informs you what parasites are present in your local area. It demonstrates if current protocols are working and that adequate compliance on the part of the owner is taking place. If testing is done alone then a positive result means that environmental contamination with zoonotic worm eggs such as *Toxocara* spp. and *Echinococcus granulosus* has already occurred. This is in contrast to horses, where equine worms are not zoonotic. In the case of *Angiostrongylus vasorum* in dogs then it means a highly pathogenic worm is already present.

**The drawbacks with faecal flotation as a test are.**

- 1. Sensitivity can be poor. A quarter of *Toxocara* spp. and a third of hookworm infections are missed even if protocols with centrifugation are carried out (Flotac is the exception to this).
- 2. Only patent infections are detected so egg shedding is already occurring. Some worms such as *Ancylostoma* spp. can also cause significant disease in the pre patent period.
- 3. Parasites shedding larvae such as *A. vasorum* will not be detected by flotation, Baermann is required.
- 4. False positives can occur through coprophagic ingestion of *Toxocara* spp. eggs from dog and cat faeces and strongyle eggs from ruminant and horse faeces.
- 5. Tapeworm eggs float poorly and are almost never detected.

Faecal flotation, however, is useful for routine testing alongside routine preventative treatment as long as the above limitations are understood, and a negative test does not mean that a dog is definitely not infected and vice versa. IDEZZ laboratories now also have a faecal antigen test for intestinal roundworms which is far more sensitive than flotation, detects pre patent infection and rules out false positives from coprophagia. Baermann and Angiodetect are both useful routine screening tests for *A. vasorum* infection.

In summary, ESCCAP UK & Ireland fully support and encourage routine testing but alongside preventative risk based protocols and if faecal flotation is being used, the limitations of this method must be understood.



## NOAH and ESCCAP UK & Ireland joint letter



NOAH and ESCCAP UK & Ireland have responded to a letter in the Vet Record <https://veterinaryrecord.bmj.com/content/186/8/252.1> questioning the routine use of ectoparasiticides.

We would like to clarify our position regarding product use and environmental contamination concerns.

- 1. The potential for environmental neonicotinoid contamination (and other insecticides) needs to be taken seriously and sources of environmental contamination investigated. Neonicotinoids are also used widely in horticulture and agricultural however, with no evidence that contamination is coming from cat and dog products.

- 2. A risk-based approach to parasiticide use in companion animals is essential to avoid over treatment. Fleas however are a source of morbidity to pets and a zoonotic risk.
- 3. The flea life cycle means that any pet may be exposed leading to household infestation. Year round prevention with an effective adulticide for all cats and dogs is therefore essential.

In summary, while the impact of parasiticides on the environment needs to be considered, so does pet and public health for which year round flea and roundworm treatment is vital.

## Post travel pet clinics

ESCCAP UK & Ireland through a range of CPD platforms including the MA Healthcare Veterinary Nurse workshops, Central CPD pet travel day and CPD solutions pet travel mini series has promoted the benefits of post pet travel clinics in practice.

These are an opportunity for client/practice bonding (we all love to talk about our holidays!) while allowing vet staff to clinically examine pets after travel, check for ticks and give essential post travel treatments.

These include heartworm and tick treatments as well as an additional praziquantel treatment to ensure owner protection and UK biosecurity against *Echinococcus multilocularis*. These clinics do not need to be run by Official Veterinarians and both vets and nurses can get involved.

## New *Angiostrongylus vasorum* diagnosis page

The new *A. vasorum* diagnosis page summarising the spread of this parasite in the UK, the importance of testing dogs with relevant clinical signs and routine screening, can now be found with the other downloads on the ESCCAP UK & Ireland website [www.esccapuk.org.uk](http://www.esccapuk.org.uk)

It also contains a flow chart to help take a systematic approach to diagnosing clinical cases.

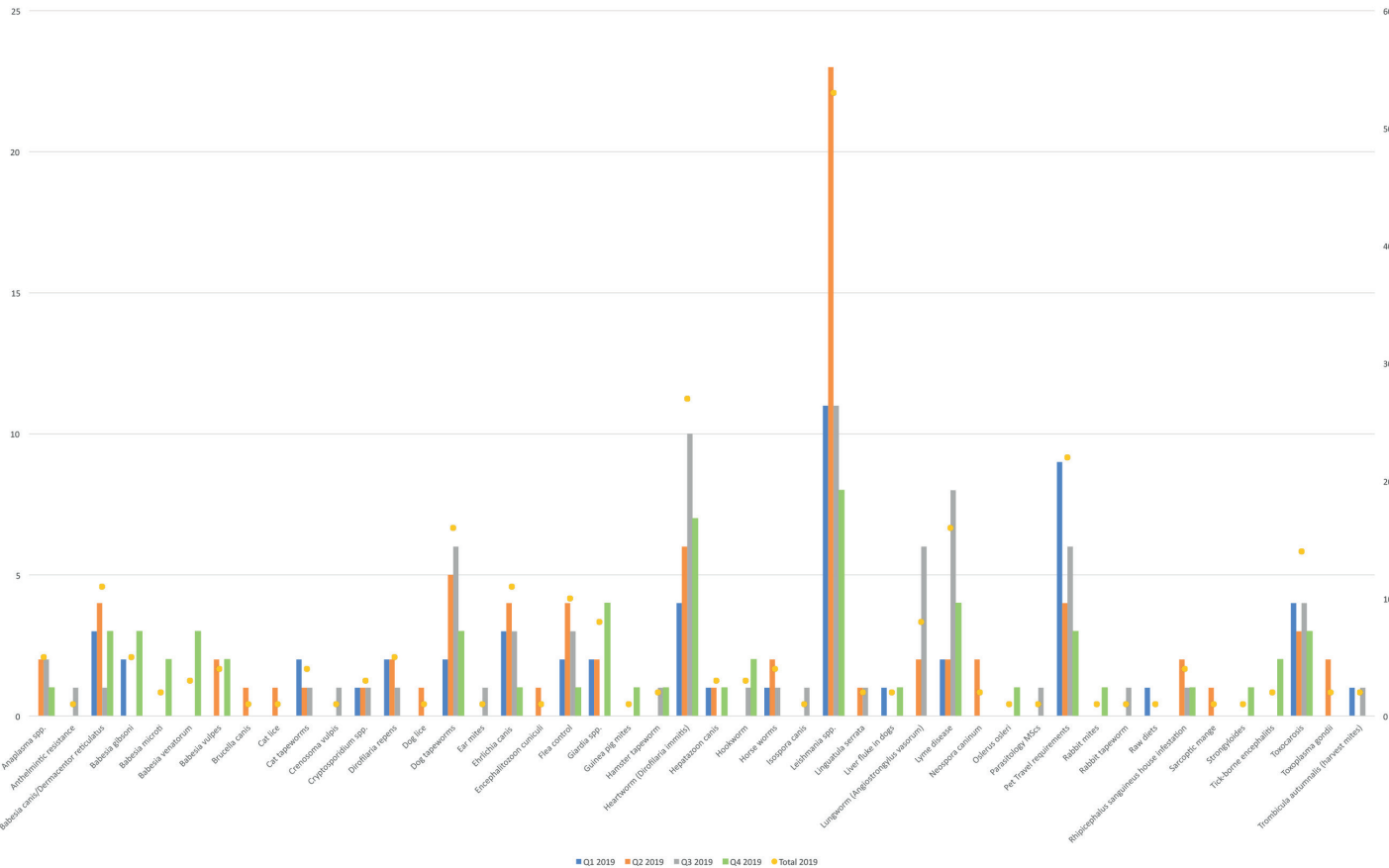
ESCCAP UK & Ireland recommends testing for *Angiostrongylus vasorum* infection alongside risk based monthly preventative treatment.

Routine screening of dogs with relevant clinical signs, routinely at their annual boosters/health check and before surgery has the following benefits.

- 1. By testing dogs with relevant clinical signs (cough, unexplained coagulopathies and neuropathies) a picture can be built up as to whether *A. vasorum* is present locally. This in turn will help to form prevention advice based on geographic risk.
- 2. In dogs on routine monthly prevention testing demonstrates efficacy to the owner, while also demonstrating good compliance and that products are being administered correctly.
- 3. Routine testing in endemic areas before surgery helps to confirm absence of the parasite, avoiding potential coagulopathies



## 2019 Parasite Enquiry Totals



# ESCCAP UK & Ireland Enquiries

ESCCAP UK & Ireland received questions from veterinary professionals and the public regarding a wide range of subjects in the last three months.

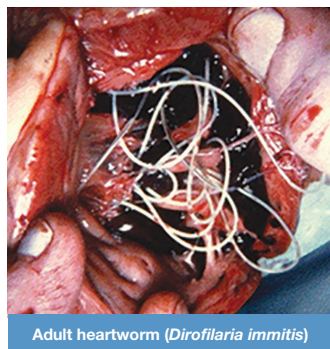
The most enquiries this quarter have shifted from exotic parasites to those found at home, particularly *Angiostrongylus vasorum* and flea infestations.

This may be related to the drop in foreign travel associated with the COVID-19 outbreak. Lungworm advertising and CPD may also be driving *A. vasorum* awareness, while a steep rise in flea infestations appears to have occurred associated with the mild winter.

There remain a large number of questions regarding the diagnosis and management of heartworm in imported dogs as more cases of infected rescue dogs are encountered by UK vets.



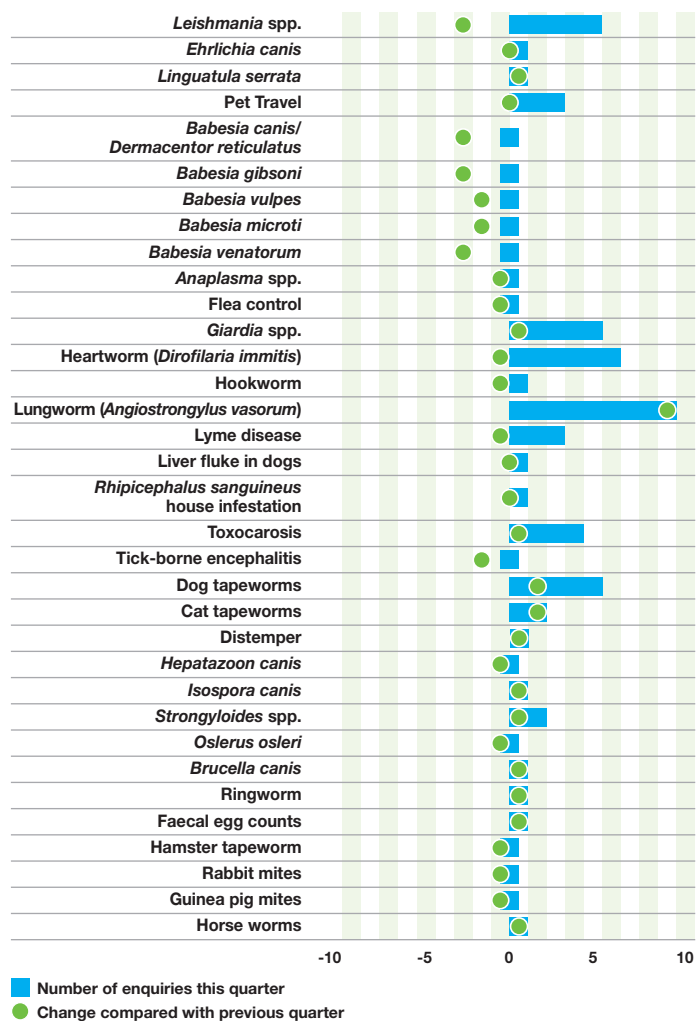
Adult heartworm (*Dirofilaria immitis*)



Adult heartworm (*Dirofilaria immitis*)

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