



Parasite Forecast

Issue 15

Autumn 2020

Welcome

Welcome to the ESCCAP UK & Ireland quarterly newsletter. The Vet Record recently published an interesting and eloquent debate piece discussing environmental insecticide contamination and flea control products in companion animals.

<https://veterinaryrecord.bmj.com/content/187/5/197>

It discusses the need for more research to establish to what extent companion animal flea products contaminate the environment. By knowing which, if any, of the insecticides we currently prescribe are significant contributors in environmental contamination, this could be considered as a factor when selecting flea control products.

The article emphasises a risk-based approach to parasite control rather than treating all pets all year round. This is something that ESCCAP UK & Ireland also promotes to prevent unnecessary treatment of pets. This is particularly effective where lifestyle and geography play major parts in parasite exposure risk - as is the case for lungworm or tapeworm infection. In the case of fleas however, evidence points towards year-round preventative treatment for cats and dogs as being the correct decision for human and animal health.

Cat fleas are present throughout the UK and can live in our centrally heated homes. Cats, dogs and people visiting households can introduce fleas, making homes with pets that never go outside still susceptible to infestation. Household flea infestations can cause misery to pets and owners and once established take at least three months to eliminate. In the absence of veterinary advice, this leads pet owners in desperation to turn to inadequate or poorly applied products and excessive environmental treatment. This is not good for pet and animal health or for the environment.

Year-round protection will help to keep pets and their owners free from living with flea infestations and, with more environmental data, we will be able to include minimising environmental impact as part of our criteria when choosing flea products.

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.

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

Each edition will also be published on the ESCCAP UK & Ireland website:
www.esccapuk.org.uk

To your parasite control success!

Ian Wright
Head of ESCCAP UK & Ireland



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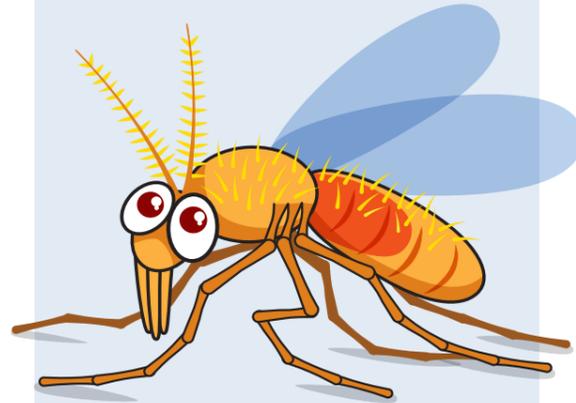
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Exotic disease in imported dogs from Eastern and Southern Europe

Another case of leishmaniosis has been reported in the Vet Record. In this case, the likely source was venereal followed by vertical transmission as the father of the infected dog was imported from Italy.

Leishmaniosis should now be considered as a differential in UK dogs with relevant signs with or without travel history. It also demonstrates how important it is to screen dogs imported from endemic countries, especially before breeding.



Sandflies are the vectors for *Leishmania* spp.

Heartworm and *Leishmania* spp. cases reported to ESCCAP UK & Ireland continue to be imported from a wide variety of countries both inside and outside Europe. This quarter these include Romania, Greece and Brazil, demonstrating the need for vigilance in dogs imported from all endemic countries. ESCCAP UK & Ireland continue to recommend four key steps (the "four pillars") in all imported dogs. These are.

1. Checking for ticks and subsequent identification
2. Treating dogs with praziquantel within 30 days of return to the UK in addition to the compulsory treatment, and treating for ticks if a tick treatment is not in place
3. Recognising clinical signs relevant to diseases in the countries visited or country of origin
4. Screening for *Leishmania*, heartworm and exotic tick-borne disease in imported dogs.

Fleas

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* spp. and 5% with *Rickettsia felis*, both zoonotic pathogens. They are of particular significance in the immune suppressed, making flea control vital in these groups, especially if self-isolating.

Veterinary professionals should continue to advise routine year-round preventative treatment to prevent household flea infestations to limit this zoonotic risk and the misery that living with household flea infestations can entail.

Lungworm

Anecdotal reports by vets suggest that routine preventative treatment against *Angiostrongylus vasorum* has dropped in the current crisis and cases of angiostrongylosis are being seen as a result.

This is an example of the importance of maintaining routine parasite prevention treatment for cats and dogs during the COVID-19 outbreak. The continued mild 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).

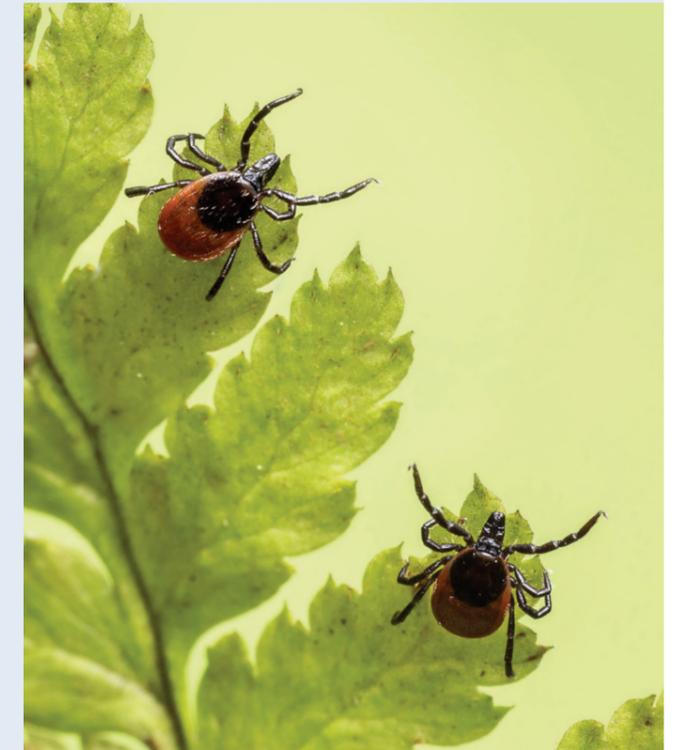


Tick-borne disease

Tick-borne encephalitis virus has now established in the UK with a second human case of TBE in the UK recently being reported.

www.gov.uk/government/news/rare-tick-borne-infections-diagnosed-in-england

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>) with spring, summer and autumn remaining peak tick activity periods.

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 dogs and human exposure 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.

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Toxocara canis

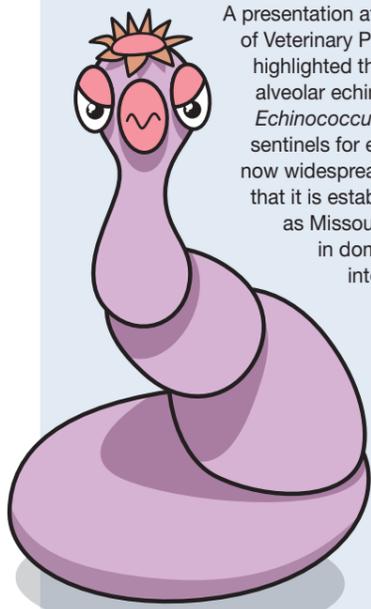
There remains no current data on the prevalence or incidence of human toxocarosis in the UK.

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. A recent survey of UK pet owners suggest that worm treatment frequency in cats and dogs is much lower than this (<https://parasitesandvectors.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13071-020-04086-2>).

Echinococcus granulosus

An untraveled UK dog has been confirmed by the University of Liverpool to be infected with the tapeworm *Mesocestoides literatus*.

This tapeworm is common in Southern Europe but not been reported in the UK for 40 years. Although severe complications from the parasite are rare, its larval form can cause severe peritonitis. Abdominal invasion of the parasite with subsequent peritonitis was recently reported to ESCCAP UK & Ireland in a dog imported from Romania. Discovery of this parasite is another compelling reason to recommend routine tapeworm preventative treatments in UK dogs that are at high risk of infection (those that hunt, scavenge carcasses or are fed unprocessed raw meat and offal).



A presentation at the American Association of Veterinary Parasitology (AAVP) Congress highlighted the importance of dogs with alveolar echinococcosis (caused by *Echinococcus multilocularis*) acting as sentinels for endemic foci. The parasite is now widespread in Canada with evidence that it is establishing in the US as far south as Missouri. Infection was detected in domestic dogs acting as intermediate hosts before adult tapeworms were detected in the reservoir coyote population.

Detection of alveolar cysts in the liver of domestic UK dogs could perform the same function here in the UK and should be considered as a differential in canine cystic liver masses.

ESCCAP Europe update

Tackling dog fouling

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Europe's parks, countryside and open spaces have become a welcome retreat for cooped up residents. Unfortunately, in many areas, this has meant a rise in dog fouling and abandoned poop bags.



ESCCAP Europe took to social media to tackle the issue. The post, which appeared on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, urged owners to take responsibility for cleaning up after their dog and promoted ESCCAP's downloadable literature on worm control.



Latest news from ESCCAP UK & Ireland

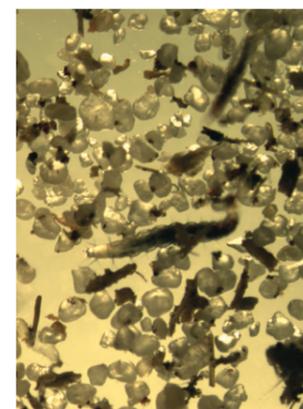
Latest Big Flea Project data

More data from The Big Flea Project has been published demonstrating the importance of pet owner education and compliance in adequate flea control.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/mve.12462>

A wide range of treatment outcomes in regard to flea control was observed across a variety of products. As there is still no evidence of flea resistance causing flea control breakdown in the field it is likely that compliance and owner education is playing a significant part in these differences.

The study emphasises the importance of continued monitoring for efficacy of flea treatments alongside owner engagement and education.



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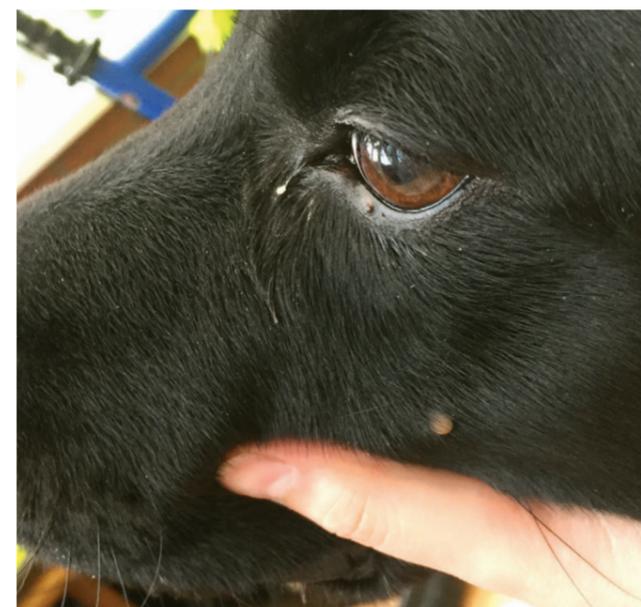


ESCCAP UK & Ireland presenting at the OV conference and Vet CPD study days.

The Vet CPD conference has been replaced this year with a series of online study days at which ESCCAP UK & Ireland will be presenting on the latest developments on ticks, flea-borne pathogens and the role of vet nurses in giving parasite control advice.

The Official Vet (OV) conference will be going ahead in an online format and ESCCAP UK & Ireland lectures will include OV's role in the control of human bartonellosis and in preventing *Leishmania infantum* establishing in the UK.

For more information visit <https://officialvet.com/> and <https://vetcpd.co.uk/virtual-congress>

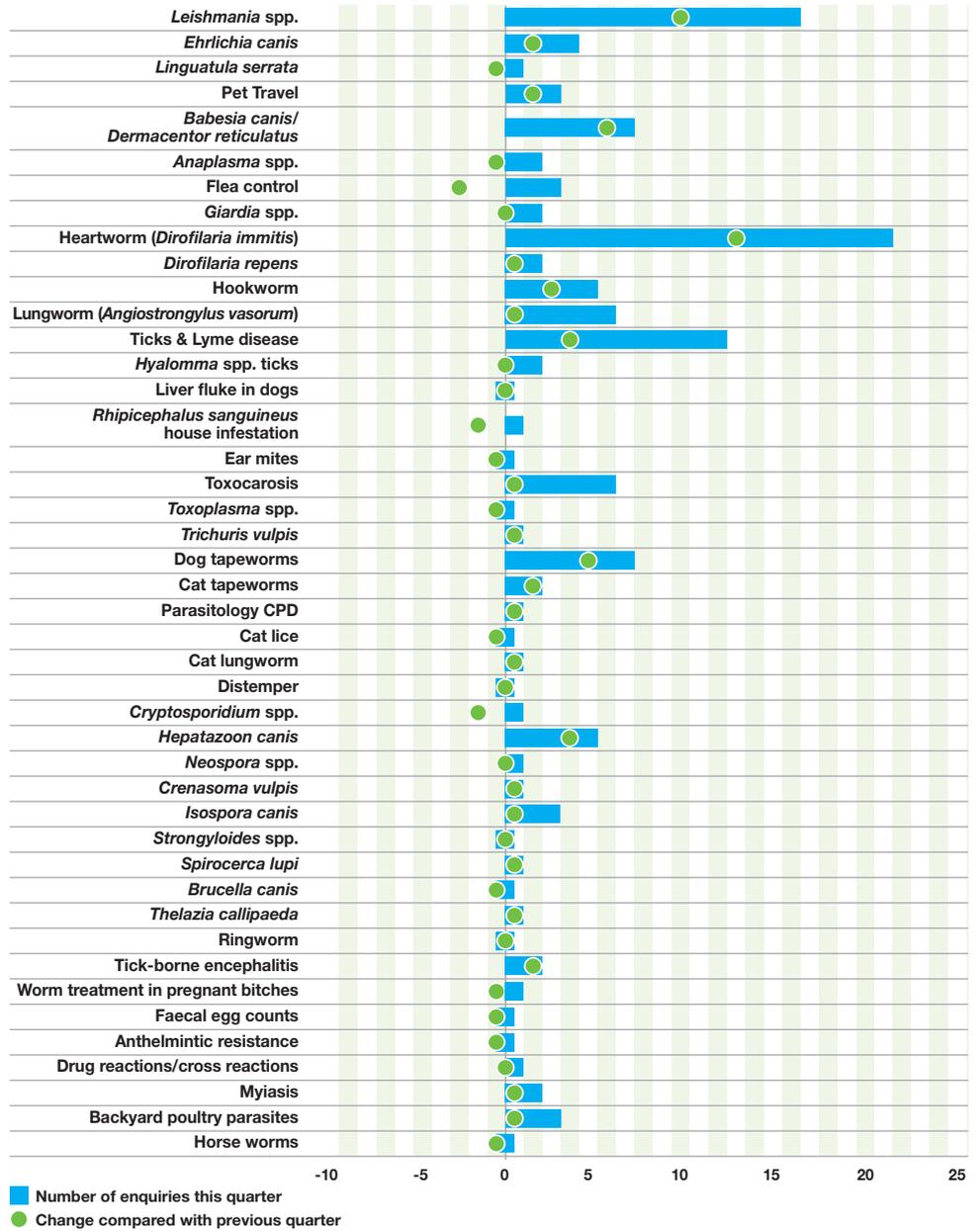


ESCCAP UK & Ireland Enquiries

ESCCAP UK & Ireland received a record-breaking number of questions (over one hundred and twenty) from veterinary professionals and the public regarding a wide range of subjects in the last three months.

There were large numbers of enquiries regarding *Leishmania* spp. and heartworm cases in imported dogs, reflecting another surge of these cases in practice. This may be due to the large numbers of new pets purchased and adopted in lockdown, many from abroad.

The high numbers of imported cases emphasise the need for screening imported dogs for both *Leishmania* spp. and heartworm as well as vigilance for relevant clinical signs and early diagnosis. Domestic parasites including ticks, and intestinal parasites continue to receive a lot of interest, particularly their control and risk of zoonotic exposure.



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