

# Echinococcus multilocularis: A tiny but terrible tapeworm

Guelph, ON

*Echinococcus multilocularis* is an emerging parasite in Canada. In recent years, this parasite has been found in wild canids such as foxes and coyotes, as well as in pet dogs. This tiny parasite poses a threat to the health of dogs and their families. Unlike other tapeworms, which pet owners may see in their pet's feces or on their fur, *E. multilocularis* is not usually seen on fur or in feces.

Foxes and coyotes become infected when they eat rodents. The tapeworm establishes, growing in the intestine of the fox or coyote and laying eggs. These eggs are passed in the feces. Dogs can be at risk through two possible routes of exposure: consuming infected feces or consuming wild rodents.

The first route of exposure occurs when a dog has access to wild canids or their feces and come in contact with *E. multilocularis* eggs. When dogs eat these eggs, they may develop alveolar echinococcosis (AE). This disease results in a tumour-like liver mass that can grow and become life-threatening.

The second route of exposure occurs when a dog eats a rodent or possibly other wildlife. The dog then acts like the wild canid and can develop an intestinal infection. This results in the dog passing parasite eggs in their feces. These eggs are infectious to people and, if accidentally consumed, can result in the same tumour-like liver masses that can affect dogs. This condition in people is also life-threatening. People can also be exposed when eating unwashed fruits and vegetable that may have been contaminated with eggs from fox/coyote feces.

You can reduce your dog's risk of developing AE by limiting their access to the feces of foxes/coyotes and the areas where these animals defecate. Dogs that hunt and eat rodents/other wildlife should be treated monthly with a dewormer for this parasite prescribed by your veterinarian. Deworming eliminates egg shedding by dogs, keeping them from contaminating their environment. Talk to your veterinary health care team about your dog's hunting habits as well as exposure to foxes, coyotes and other wildlife, so they can create a custom deworming strategy to protect your pet and your family. More information on *E. multilocularis* can be found [here](#).

## For more information:

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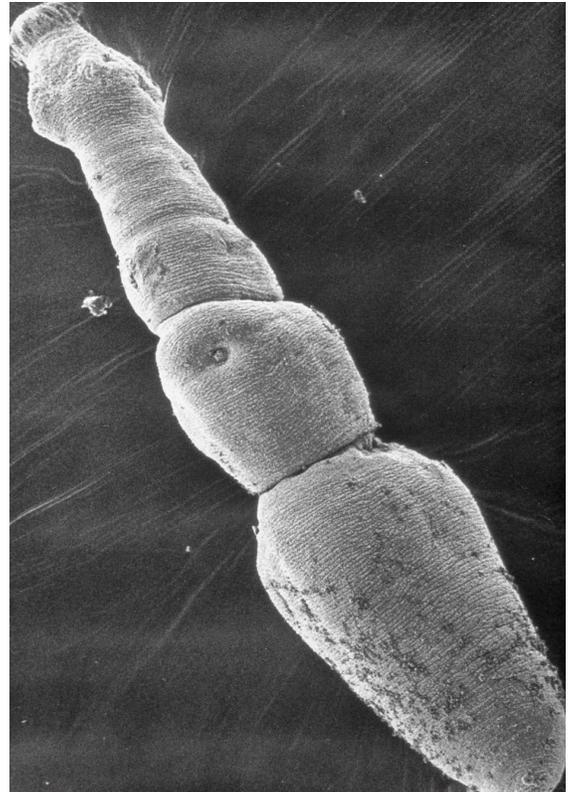


Photo courtesy of Bayer

Protect your pets and your family  
from *Echinococcus multilocularis*.