

Giardiasis

Occupational Parasitic Infection from Handling Rodents

What is Giardiasis?

Giardiasis (“Beaver fever”) is a disease caused by a single-celled protozoan called *Giardia intestinalis* (aka *Giardia lamblia* or *G. duodenalis*) that lives in the small intestine. It is found worldwide and infects livestock, horses, dogs, rodents, and people.

How does infection occur?

Fecal-oral transmission is the most common route of transmitting infection. Surfaces, water, food, etc., may be contaminated with feces containing *Giardia*. Infection is often transmitted by consuming contaminated food or water, but may be transmitted via any surface or activity with potential fecal exposure (even the smallest amounts of infected feces may transmit the disease). Travelers and hikers are more likely to become infected from drinking untreated water.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can take a month to start but usually start within 1 to 2 weeks of exposure. Some may experience no symptoms while others may have diarrhea, stomach cramping, gas, and nausea.

How do I prevent it?

Do not drink untreated water. If working with an infected animal, wear appropriate PPE such as gloves, mask, and eye protection. Wash your hands thoroughly after handling animals or contaminated items. Wash hands before eating and before/after preparing food.

How is it treated?

Giardiasis usually clears on its own in a few months, but it can also be treated with antibiotics.

Resources used:

- Agriculture Guide 3rd Edition (2010)
- List of Zoonoses - Special Pet Topics – (2016) *Merck Veterinary Manual* 11th ed.
- Chapter 28, Selected Zoonoses, (2015) *Lab Animal Medicine*, 3rd ed. The Center for Food Security and Public Health Zoonotic Disease Factsheets: Giardiasis
- The Center for Food Security and Public Health Zoonotic Transmission Routes: Giardiasis