



FieldHaven Feline Center

# Facts About Tritrichomonas Foetus



## What is *Tritrichomonas foetus* (T. foetus)?

T. foetus is a parasite that lives in the lower intestine and colon of infected cats. It is most commonly found in young cats from multicat households, particularly pedigree breeding catteries.

## What are the signs and symptoms of T. foetus?

The signs and symptoms of T. foetus vary depending on how well a cat's immune system is at fighting and controlling the parasite. Some cats show no symptoms at all unless stressed, but most cats have on-going or recurrent diarrhea that may contain blood or mucus and generally has a strong odor. Affected cats generally don't act sick or lose weight. It can cause clinical signs in adults, but most commonly affects those less than two years of age.

## How is T. foetus transmitted?

Transmission occurs when a cat ingests feces from an infected cat that is shedding the parasite. This occurs when cats live in a crowded environment with poor sanitation, when cats share a litter box or step in fecal messes and groom themselves afterward, or when cats groom feces off of an infected cat.

There is no evidence that T. foetus can be transmitted to people, dogs, or animals other than cats.

## Treatment and Management

Unfortunately, there is no immediate cure for T. foetus. Initial treatment with an anti-parasitic drug called ronidazole can reduce symptom severity in some cats, but the cat's body has to clear the infection in its own time. This can take up to two years after diagnosis.

Dietary changes (high fiber, digestible food) and probiotics can help manage symptoms of Tritrichomonas.

Even cats who are showing no symptoms after treatment can shed the parasite and spread the infection. For this reason, it is recommended that cats who have been diagnosed with *T. foetus* not share litter boxes with other cats if possible, not be housed near cats with suppressed immune systems, and be isolated from other cats if they are not able to contain their feces to a litter box.

Fortunately, *Tritrichomonas* doesn't survive very long in the environment and is easily killed by most routine disinfectants.

*T. foetus*-infected cats should remain indoors to protect them from other intestinal parasites and to prevent the spread of *T. foetus* among other cats in the community.

Regular trips to the veterinarian for check-ups and supportive therapies can help a cat with *T. foetus* feel well while their body works to clear the infection.