Ollulanus tricuspis: Intestinal Parasite of Cats

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Ollulanus tricuspis is found in the cat, fox, and occasionally, the pig. It lives in the stomach and the first inch or so of the small intestine. It is found throughout the United States and is a trichostrongyle. Trichostrongyles make up a large family of worm-like parasites. But, O. tricuspis is rather an enigma in the parasite world. One of the reasons it is a little odd, is that there are literally hundreds of species of trichostrongyles that can cause serious disease in herbivores, and O. tricuspis is the only trichostrongyle in carnivores, and it seldom causes disease.

The life cycle of Ollulanus tricuspis is a bit odd, too. The adult worm lays larvae that can do one of two things. They can pass out of the animal when it vomits and infect another animal that eats the vomitus. Or, the larvae can stay in the stomach of the original host and develop into adults there - never leaving the host. Real stay-at-homes.

The adult worm is only 1mm long, so diagnosis is made by examining the vomitus microscopically and looking for adult worms or larvae. There is no known treatment. The best method of control is through good sanitation.

Cows and sheep can be infested with a trichostrongyle commonly called the 'barber-pole worm.' The female worm's white ovaries spiral around its red intestine giving the appearance of a barber's pole.

The female worm has three cusps, or tooth-like structures on her tail, hence the name tri (three) - cuspis.