

THE SOFT STOOL MYSTERY DIARRHEA, SOFT STOOLS & IBD

An Article from TIBCS Health Committee

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No longer is it possible for any Bengal breeder to claim that the Bengals just have a "sensitive" intestinal tract always prone to soft stools & diarrhea. Sound familiar?.....Something we used to hear all the time and still do on occasion, even from vets. With access to internet networking, new grain-free kibble and some newer treatments for Coccidia & Tritrichomonas foetus, more and more catteries are faced with nearly picture perfect poop. Unfortunately the picture is not nearly so perfect for everyone.

Lots of people, ourselves included, jumped into Bengals without knowing anything about breeding cats and it has been a steep learning curve. A lot of people ignore what cycles in and out and don't know how to cure what they have. Much of it doesn't test positive at the vet, so treatment is clueless and frustration mounts in direct proportion to the vet bills.

We tend to think much of it is diet based and that most Bengals are especially sensitive to grain-based diets, not to mention meat "by-products" (read most kibbles and canned brands). Perhaps Bengals' sensitivity is because of closer proximity to the wild ancestor and its primordial diet. Or perhaps it is more true of all cats than we realize. If an animal is healthy because of their diet and their immune system is healthy, they can exist with many of these pathogens and not be symptomatic because there is no overgrowth.

If you have a Bengal that cycles in and out of diarrhea, there are some supportive therapies that you can do. Two supplements which will help heal the gut are bonded L-Glutamine (an amino acid, a very high quality form is GlutImmune, available from www.wellwisdom.com) and pro-biotic products such as Wysong products; Call of the Wild or F-Biotic. Adding in about 15% plain cooked pumpkin will help firm up the stool without further inflaming the intestinal walls. Also, a high quality diet is essential. Bengals need a primarily meat based diet, using a product that uses human grade meat as the base.

EVO is a new grain-free kibble (available from www.naturapet.com) which does just that. Many breeders report lots of healthy changes from feeding this kibble. We recommend changing over to it very, very slowly to avoid being discouraged if it brings on diarrhea. We believe EVO allows the cat to start to dislodge layers of mucoid plaque caused by the previous grain-based diet. Typically vets will put a Bengal with runny stools on an IBD food that will stop diarrhea because there are ingredients in these foods like beet pulp that will plug up a runny bowel. They only bury the problem, for it to surface as long term effects (no pun intended)

Basic husbandry tells us to keep very clean conditions; keep the hands and litter boxes washed, especially if any diarrhea starts up. A brief summary on the order of diagnostic pursuit is; a) parasite/pathogen, b) diet sensitivities, c) Viral and d) Inflammatory Bowel Disease. Until you've got a handle on what's wrong, you really can't start treatment...or it's hit and miss; and yet sometimes that seems like your only option.

One breeder recently had a weird outbreak of very runny diarrhea in virtually all of their cats. The cats were taken in and a battery of routine testing was done without anything identified. Luckily, a fellow breeder posted to the TIBCSMEMBERS list (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TIBCSMEMBERS/>) about flavor additives that most chicken is soaked in. The cats were being fed raw ground chicken. To save money, the breeder was buying a cheap outlet brand of one of the major brands of chicken and grinding it. Upon hearing about the flavor additives, as an experiment, the breeder cut back on the percentage of raw meat in the meat mixture being fed and the diarrhea disappeared in all but two cats! Then the breeder called around and found a wholesaler who delivers and was able to buy a free range, no antibiotic brand of chicken with no flavor additives for the same price as the outlet brand!! The breeder again increased the percentage of raw chicken in the meat mixture and this time there was no resulting diarrhea. There were just two cats that did not respond to change of diet who then did respond to a week of treatment with metronizadole.

Coccidia

This parasite is very, very common and very easy to get a re-infection, especially if your cats are housed more than one to a space. There was a complete article by Lorraine Shelton on Cocci & the use of Baycox in the 2005 winter Bulletin (vol. 19, issue 4). The important things to realize about Baycox are: a) Use only the 5% solution (available from <http://www.interpet.biz/Baycox.html>.) and NOT the 2.5% solution for pigeons, b) This drug works best when it is used at the age of 4-6 weeks as a preventative of coccidia infection in kittens. and c) Follow the directions carefully and when you use it, draw up some water into the syringe first and then the Baycox, so that when it is administered, there is a little "chaser" of water already in the syringe to help wash down the Baycox so it doesn't irritate the esophagus. (They really hate this as it is very bitter)

Tritrichomonas foetus or TF

For information about what TF is, read this link where there are excellent pictures you can share with your vet; <http://www.fabcats.org/tritrichomonas.html>

Tritrich may be causing much of the diarrhea so common in Bengals. A relatively new breeder who has bought in 5 Bengals from 5 different catteries found that every single one tested positive for TriTrich using the TF Pouch Test..... a frightening bit of information in a quickly developing breed that frequently trades and sells between breeders in a frenzy to keep up. This breeder has used the TF

Pouch Tests & Ronidazole for treatment, but has had the TF re-occur in every cat. However, the good news is that post treatment overgrowths of TriTrich have been controlled by switching to a raw diet and the cats are symptom free.

From Dr. Gookin's research: In a study of long-term outcome in 26 cats with diarrhea and T. foetus infection, clinical signs resolved a median of 9-months after the onset of diarrhea (range, 4 months to 2 years). Relapses of diarrhea were common and associated with dietary change, medical treatments unassociated with T. foetus infection, and travel. On the basis of fecal PCR, T. foetus was undetectable in >50% of cats when tested 2-5 years after diagnosis. Thus, cats with T. foetus may have a good long-term prognosis for spontaneous resolution of disease.

Recently 50 cats were fecal tested at a southern California show (under a study conducted by Dr. Stanley Marks, UC Davis) Results demonstrated that 11/50 cats (22%) were positive on culture (InPouch) for TriTrich. foetus. 15/50 cats (30%) had Giardia present. 9/11 (82%) of the cats with TriTrich also had Giardia 2/50 (4%) cats had Cryptosporidium.

For those of you who breed outside cats, the Trich culture test should be considered for incoming queens. This may not please your customers, as it is a \$200.00 test that takes 2 weeks to complete the culture. So how do you test for Tritrich? There are two options:

- 1) The TF Pouch test, about \$4-5 each. Here is the link for the Tritrich test pouch instructions.....This tells you to "incubate" the contents of the pouch or 2-12 days before you look at it under the scope. The pouch test can possibly miss "inactive" TF. To read about the TF Pouch Test and order: <http://www.biomed1.com/TF.htm>
- 2) Also available from your vet are PCR tests which are a 2 week culture, costing approximately \$200.

So how do you treat TF? Use Ronidazole, which is suspected of being mutagenic and carcinogenic, which is why it was withdrawn from the US market, (and elsewhere) for use in humans. DO NOT use in pregnant cats. More info on drug here: http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/sc/scan/out01_en.html

The dosage given for this drug is 30-50 mg/kg, twice a day for 14 days.

DO NOT give the avian version. This needs to be formulated in a lab using a script from your Vet:

Labs: Roadrunner Pharmacy
711 E. Carefree Hwy., Suite 140
Phoenix, Az. 85085
(877) 518-4589 (623) 434-1180

OR: West Lab Pharmacy
4410 West Newberry Street

Suite #5
Gainesville, FL 32607
352 377-8156

This drug's safety in pregnant cats has not been established. The test group for the published safety and efficacy study consisted of 10 week old kittens. Here is a reference for your vet:

http://www.cvm.ncsu.edu/mbs/gookin_file4.doc

Here is the link to Dr. Gookin's site; She is doing a lot of research on Tritrich:

http://www2.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/project/cvmaprhome/gookin_file2.htm

Some have tried to use Tindazole or Tindamax is an alternative drug for use against Trichomonas (T.Foetus), Giardia, coccidia and many other protozoa in cats. It is available from your local Pharmacy with a Vet's prescription. The dosage is 250 mg Tabs given at 30mg/kg once daily for 10 days. This drug is safer and far more obtainable and affordable than Ronidazole, but may not be as effective and the trich can re-occur. Dr. Gookin is doing a study on using Tinidazole as an alternative to Ronidazole, since finding that the possibility of re-infection of TF in cats after administrating Ronidazole. Please check her site for the latest information and updates.