



### DID YOU KNOW?

Autumn has arrived bringing with it some muddy messes so we wanted to give you some information on a displeasing microscopic protozoa that thrives in standing water and mud - Giardia.



Giardia is not a worm, nor is it a bacteria or virus. It is a one-celled parasitic species that can live for months in mud and stagnant water. It can infect mammals, amphibians and birds within its seven different genotypes. Prolonged freezing temperatures will kill most or all Giardia however once temperatures begin to rise in spring, Giardia survival rates will increase. You can understand how warmer weather, rainy days, muddy dog runs, pet stores, dog parks, hiking trails and dogs congregating day in and day out, some of them silent carriers of Giardia, creates perfect breeding grounds for the protozoa. There is simply no way around it. It will always be present in dog parks, dog runs, on your hikes, in bodies of water and possibly here at camp. Giardia cysts can be ingested by dogs eating mud or feces, drinking infected water, chewing on sticks or grass, sniffing the ground where cysts are present or just stepping in it then licking their paw.

Several things can happen if Giardia enters a dog's body. The dog's immune system may eliminate the protozoan from the body on its own. Puppies in general will not have an immune system strong enough to do this and are more likely to develop active Giardia. The protozoa can enter the dog's small intestine and start to reproduce Giardia cysts that can then infect other dogs/cats/humans.



The dog may or may not show symptoms of infection. The dog can become a silent carrier, infecting other dogs, not showing any symptoms OR the dog can become ill, be taken to the veterinarian, diagnosed and treated for Giardia. Note that having once been infected with Giardia does not guard against future infections.





Diarrhea (smelly and mucousy stool. Often has a greenish tinge and may contain blood.) vomiting, dull coat and weight loss are some symptoms a dog may experience if infected with Giardia. Many dogs however, will test positive for Giardia but never show any of the above symptoms. Also, some dogs can be infected and not show symptoms for years then a sudden stress on the immune system can bring out the active disease. This is one reason it is so important to keep up on yearly fecal exams.

If your dog has been diagnosed with Giardia, follow your veterinarian's instructions. Wash bed linens and dog bed covers and use Clorox/bleach based products on surfaces to kill the microscopic protozoa.

**Wash your hands.** Certain genotypes of Giardia **can spread to humans** and cause diarrhea however keep in mind that Cassie and Anna have been working in the animal industry, cleaning up dirty kennels and floors for years and they have never contracted the disease.. **Of course wash your hands after handling dog feces!**

On the plus side, in general, Giardia is easy to treat (although some dogs can get stubborn cases), especially if the dog is well cared for and healthy with a strong immune system. Typically, Giardia is NOT detrimental to the dog's health. Sadly for malnourished and stressed dogs, Giardia can inflict real health concerns and sometimes even death in small, sickly puppies if left untreated.

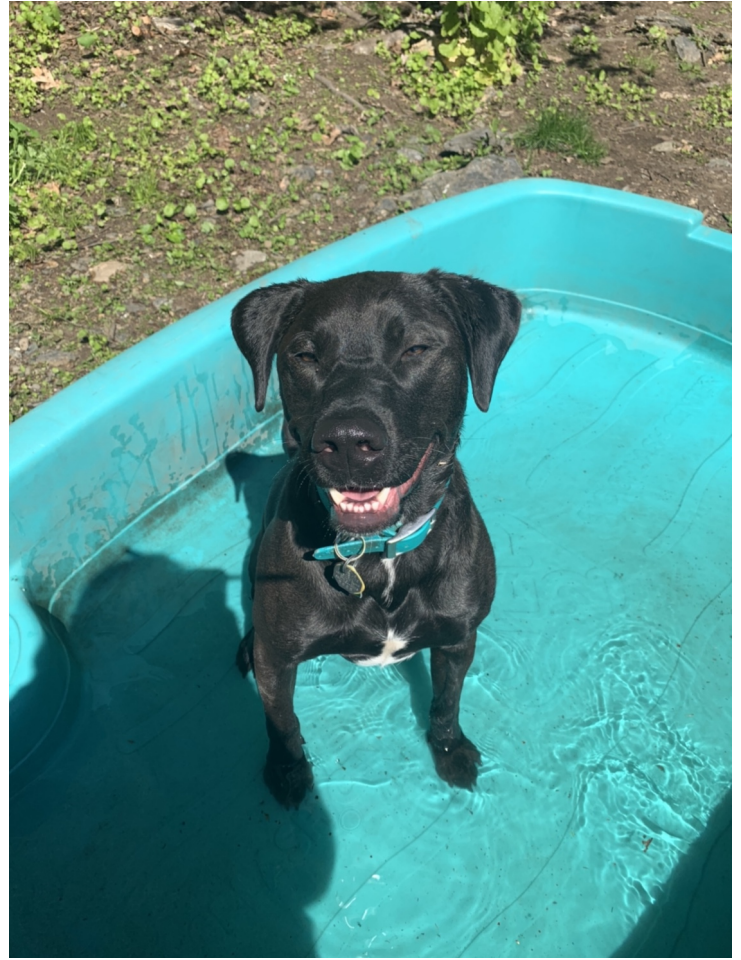
**So what does Giardia mean at dog camp and how do we handle it ?**



We will never be able to fully prevent dogs with Giardia from attending camp. We will not ask every client to do a Giardia test everyday before coming to camp (what was negative today could be positive tomorrow).. It is impractical for any dog owner to bring their dog to the vet for a fecal test every time they come to camp. Also, there will always be false negatives as the swimming protozoa itself and the cyst is not always present in every fecal sample depending on the protozoa life cycle. We do however require yearly fecal exams and clean fecal results for all new campers and training pups entering the facility to do our best to lower the risk of the spread of Giardia. Additionally, if we find that a pup has been infected with Giardia, the pup must be medicated and cleared by their veterinarian before returning to camp.

Here at camp, we disinfect all indoor surfaces, toys, and bowls and we pick up poop immediately all day long. We can not however, disinfect nature in our outdoor play yards, which can possibly contain Giardia at times. Due to cold winters in Millerton, Giardia is not a problem year round at camp. However, as the temperatures warm up, and at times in the warmer wet months of Autumn it will become active and we will see cases increase.





Communication is the best way to keep parasites at bay therefor we greatly appreciate when our clients tell us their dog has been diagnosed with Giardia or they are experiencing loose stools so we can address this accordingly and keep track of how common it is throughout the season!

From our pack to yours,  
Cassie & Anna