

WHAT'S KILLING CALIFORNIA SEA OTTERS?

FACTS ABOUT TOXO AND CAT POOP

Toxo – short for *Toxoplasma gondii* -- is a tiny parasite that lives in the bodies of many people and animals.

MOST PEOPLE WITH TOXO NEVER SHOW ANY SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS.

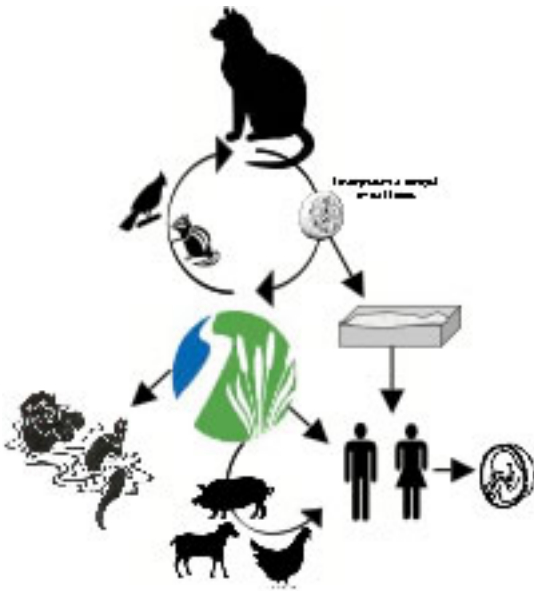
But if you do get sick, you may be ill for about 2 weeks and have fever, head and muscle aches, sore throat and swollen neck, and difficulty seeing.

YOU SHOULD WORRY ABOUT TOXO IF...

...your immune system is compromised, say, if you have AIDS or are taking drugs that suppress your immune system. Your body's defenses may not be able to ward off the spread of *Toxoplasma*, and the parasites may cause brain disease.

...you're pregnant – a *Toxoplasma* infection of an unborn child may cause birth defects, blindness and brain damage.

If you think you have been exposed to *Toxoplasma*, especially if you are pregnant, talk to your doctor.



Most cats never show any symptoms of illness from *toxoplasma*....yet they're the ones who spread it.

HOW DOES THAT HAPPEN?

Even though lots of animals, including birds, have *Toxoplasma*, only cats – pet cats, feral cats, mountain lion, bobcats -- shed *Toxoplasma* “eggs” in their poop. They can shed millions of “eggs” for 7-14 days the first time they get infected with *Toxoplasma* (and they usually get infected only once in their lives). The “eggs” live in the soil and water, are spread by earthworms, flies and beetles, and are picked up by other animals. Cats pick up *Toxoplasma* when they eat small wild animals. The parasites spread throughout

the body to places like the lung, eye and brain, and remain in the body for a long time.

SEA OTTERS ARE BEING KILLED BY TOXO! We know that *Toxo* “eggs” are making their way into the ocean, but we don’t know exactly how sea otters are becoming infected. We do know that the only way to prevent them from being infected is to reduce cat poop in the environment.

YOU COULD INGEST TOXO BY:

- Eating raw or undercooked meat or shellfish;
- Drinking water that contains *Toxoplasma* “eggs;”
- Getting soil with *Toxoplasma* “eggs” in your mouth;
- Getting infected cat poop from your hand into your mouth after cleaning the cat box;
- Being infected before you were born, if your mother got *Toxoplasma* while she was pregnant.

PROTECT YOURSELF!

- Cook shellfish well and meat until it is no longer pink.
- Use hot, soapy water to wash knives and cutting boards used to prepare meat.
- Wash dirt off vegetables before eating.
- Avoid drinking water from rivers and streams.
- Wash your hands after gardening and remove dirt from under your nails.
- Wear gloves if you work with soil or change the cat litter.
- Wash your hands with warm, soapy water after cleaning the cat box.
- Clean your cat box daily—it takes about 24 hours for the “eggs” in cat poop to **be able to** infect people.
- Stop your cat from hunting small wild animals **and birds** by keeping it inside.
- Feed your cat dry or canned cat food, or cook fresh meat before you feed it to your cat.

PROTECT YOUR SEA OTTERS!

- Don’t flush kitty litter down the toilet – sewage treatment may not kill *Toxo* “eggs.”
- Put cat poop in plastic bags and drop them in your trashcan.
- Keep your cats indoors.
- Remove cat poop from your yard. *Toxo* “eggs” last for months in soil and can move into rivers and oceans during the rainy season.

Filename: Facts_About_Toxo_and_Cat_Poop.doc
Directory: C:\Documents and Settings\Owner\My Documents\Website
Work Files\CA Sea Otter files\CONTENT
Template: C:\Documents and Settings\Owner\Application
Data\Microsoft\Templates\Normal.dot
Title: Toxoplasma gondii
Subject:
Author:
Keywords:
Comments:
Creation Date: 11/30/2006 9:49:00 PM
Change Number: 2
Last Saved On: 11/30/2006 9:49:00 PM
Last Saved By: griffgraff
Total Editing Time: 2 Minutes
Last Printed On: 11/30/2006 9:50:00 PM
As of Last Complete Printing
Number of Pages: 2
Number of Words: 588 (approx.)
Number of Characters: 2,650 (approx.)