



raccoon roundworm

Baylisascaris procyonis

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Nematoda
Class:
Order:
Family:

FEATURES

This roundworm is a parasite of the small intestine of raccoons. Its tan-white body is unsegmented and cylindrical. The body is tapered at the ends. The adult worm is six to eight inches in length. Larval stages of the raccoon roundworm live in a number of different mammals and birds.

BEHAVIORS

The raccoon roundworm may be found statewide in Illinois wherever its host lives. The adults of this roundworm live in the intestines of raccoons and produce eggs that are shed in the feces of the host raccoon. The adult worms may also occasionally be found in mice, woodchucks, squirrels, rabbits and birds. Once outside the body of the host, the worm larvae develop inside the eggs within 30 days and are infectious to young raccoons and other animals if these eggs are eaten. In young raccoons, the larvae develop to the adult stage in the intestines. If eaten by other animals, the larvae burrow out of the intestinal tract and invade many internal organs, including the nervous system, and form cysts. A raccoon can become infected by eating these animals and ingesting the encysted larvae. The effects on raccoons is small. However, the larvae can harm or kill

other animals if migrating through the nervous system. Signs of this infection include circling behavior, paralysis, problems in moving and/or blindness. Humans may ingest and be infected by eggs. Human deaths as a result are not common but have occurred. The larvae may also affect vision if migrating through the eye.

HABITATS

- bottomland forests
- coniferous forest
- southern Illinois lowlands
- upland deciduous forest

ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident: statewide

Summer resident:

Migrant:

Winter resident:

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.
Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume 2: Woodland Habitats CD-ROM.