



whipworm

Trichuris vulpis

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

FEATURES

The whipworm is a roundworm parasite of the large intestine of foxes, coyotes and dogs. Its body has a long, thin, anterior end and a short, thick, posterior end. The worm is about one and three-fourths to three inches in length. Its brown or yellow eggs are lemon-shaped with a plug at each end. The eggs are resistant to disintegration and may survive for five years in the soil.

BEHAVIORS

The whipworm may be found statewide in Illinois wherever its hosts live. The adult of this roundworm lives in the large intestine of its host. Its eggs containing larvae are deposited in the host's feces. Under favorable conditions, the larvae develop in the soil to reach the infective stage in about three weeks. The host becomes infected by ingesting these eggs. Larvae are released in the host's small intestine and stay there for two to 10 days. Then they move to the large intestine where they mature and begin releasing eggs in about three months. The adult burrows into the intestinal wall and feeds on blood. Young canids with heavy worm infections can be affected by diarrhea and weight loss. Adults generally show few effects.

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.