

# Toxocarosis: a One Health issue

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You might wonder why *DTB* is publishing an article this month about toxocarosis, a disease that can develop in humans as a result of transmission of infective *Toxocara* worm eggs from the faeces of cats, dogs or foxes. Symptomatic disease is rare in the UK, so its possibility is unlikely to be uppermost in the minds of most healthcare professionals. In contrast, protecting humans from toxocarosis is a prominent concern in veterinary practice and pet owners are recommended to worm their cats and dogs regularly.<sup>1</sup> As the health of adult cats and dogs is not usually affected by *Toxocara*, apart from kittens and puppies, worming cats and dogs to treat *Toxocara* infection is done in the name of protecting human health.

Recently, there has been a trend towards more frequent and widespread use of parasiticides in cats and dogs to treat *Toxocara* infection and also to treat and prevent other common parasite diseases (so-called blanket protection). British veterinary organisations are concerned about this because of the potential harm that might be caused to invertebrates when parasiticides end up in the environment. In a joint statement, the veterinary professional organisations have recommended that vets adopt a risk-based approach to prescribing the drugs.<sup>2</sup> Decisions about the optimal use of parasiticides against *Toxocara* must necessarily include an up-to-date evaluation of the evidence on the risk of toxocarosis in humans. To help with this, *DTB* together with *Veterinary Prescriber* commissioned an evidence review on toxocarosis that is published in this issue.

*Veterinary Prescriber* ([www.veterinaryprescriber.org](http://www.veterinaryprescriber.org)) is a logical partner to *DTB* on this topic. It is an independent medicines information resource for vets founded by the author, a pharmacist who worked on *DTB* as an associate editor for over 20 years. Vets face similar challenges to doctors—the need to interpret an ever-growing body of published evidence and to evaluate and decide whether to prescribe new medicines, as well as the influences of pharmaceutical marketing—and so they have a similar need for access to objective and practical advice on medicines. Like *DTB*, *Veterinary Prescriber* accepts no sponsorship or advertising and is free to discuss all medicines and to be critical of evidence and promotion of pharmaceutical products.

*Toxocara* is an example of a problem that stands at the intersection between the health of people, animals and the environment—a One Health issue.<sup>3,4</sup> Use of a drug intervention to protect the health of humans that involves the treatment of a population of cats and dogs numbering more than 20 million (most of which will not benefit from the treatment) is an example of where joined-up thinking between the human and veterinary medicine professions is needed.<sup>5,6</sup> The biodiversity crisis demands that we make the best decisions about how we use parasiticides in the interest of the health of people, animals and the planet.

**Competing interests** None declared. Refer to the online supplementary files to view the ICMJE form(s).

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