

Bartonella spp.

Bartonellosis

Bacteria of the genus *Bartonella* are found in the blood of many wild rodents and larger mammals, such as deer, throughout the world. In these natural hosts, infection with the bacteria does not appear to influence fitness. However, the transfer of these bacteria to domestic animals and humans can result in disease.

Bartonella spp. appear to be transmitted from one animal to another by a range of biting insects, particularly fleas, although ticks have also been implicated. The disease can also pass, to humans at least, by direct inoculation e.g. via scratches or bites from heavily infected animals leading to flea dirt containing *Bartonella* contaminating the wounds. An example of this is "cat scratch disease", a problem in immuno-compromised humans.



Bartonellosis (infection with *Bartonella* spp.) is largely an infection of cats where it causes a wide spectrum of problems dependent on the underlying health of the animal, although current work is investigating its association with disease in other companion animal species. It appears that many animals carry *Bartonella* spp. without clinical signs. When stressed or immuno-compromised cats may develop fever, anaemia, heart and liver problems and neurological signs. Bartonellosis may also be associated with endocarditis in dogs.

FAQs

What are the clinical signs?

It appears that many animals carry *Bartonella* but remain subclinical. When stressed or immuno-compromised cats may develop fever, anaemia, heart and liver problems, and neurological signs.

Where can I go for more information?

The European Advisory Board on Cat Diseases has a website containing up to date information on feline bartonellosis <http://www.abcdcatsvets.org/feline-bartonellosis/>

Canine and feline bartonellosis was also recently reviewed (DOI: 10.1186/s13071-018-3152-6)

Last reviewed July 2021 by Emi Barker

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