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## Intestinal coccidiosis in young rabbits

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### Abstract

Intestinal coccidiosis is one of the most economically significant parasitic diseases affecting domestic and commercial rabbits worldwide. It is primarily caused by several *Eimeria* species that leading to enteritis, malabsorption, diarrhea, dehydration, and growth retardation, especially in young rabbits. The present study reports on the intestinal coccidiosis in young rabbits that are used for animal experiments. Treatment strategies focus mainly on the administration of anticoccidial drugs such as sulfonamides, toltrazuril, and diclazuril, which effectively reduce oocyst shedding and improve clinical recovery when combined with supportive therapy. Understanding the interplay between husbandry practices, parasite biology, and therapeutic efficacy is crucial for designing sustainable coccidiosis management programs in rabbit production systems.

**Keywords:** Intestinal coccidiosis, rabbits, *Eimeria* spp

### Introduction

Coccidiosis is caused by intracellular protozoon parasites of the genus *Eimeria* and causes significant mortality in domestic rabbits. Coccidiosis is one of the most frequent and prevalent parasitic diseases, accompanied by weight loss, mild intermittent to severe diarrhea with faeces containing mucus or blood and results in dehydration, decreased rabbit breeding (Jithendran and Bhat, 1996) [4]. There are about 15 species of *Eimeria* that are known to induce pathology in the intestine of rabbits causing intestinal coccidiosis. The most common *Eimeria* spp. that cause intestinal coccidiosis in rabbits are *E. magna*, *E. irresidua*, *E. media*, and *E. perforans* (Fox, 1984) [3]. The disease is seen most often in rearing establishments where sanitation is poor. The intestinal coccidial species causes weight reduction, diarrhoea and mortality due to villi atrophy will lead to malabsorption of nutrients, electrolyte disbalance, anaemia, hypoproteinemia and dehydration (Karaer, 2001) [5]. Intestinal coccidiosis often is observed in rabbits aged from six weeks to five months old. Older animals can acquire immunity after recovery and become carriers (Kulisic *et al.*, 2006) [6]. The present report is on intestinal coccidiosis in young rabbits that are used for animal experiments.

### Clinical observations

Present study was conducted on three New Zealand white rabbits that belongs to the 2-3 months of age which by exhibiting the signs of anorexia, severe diarrhoea, dullness and weakness. All the rabbits were regularly feed with concentrated rabbit feed, carrots and green grass.

### Laboratory diagnosis

Diagnosis of intestinal coccidiosis depends on the analysis of feces of suspected rabbits. Microscopic identification of *Eimeria* spp. oocysts through the fecal analysis of suspected animals is very important (Pakandl *et al.*, 2008) [7]. Faecal samples were examined by direct microscopic examination which the presence of parasitic oocysts.



**Fig 1:** Rabbit with severe diarrhoea

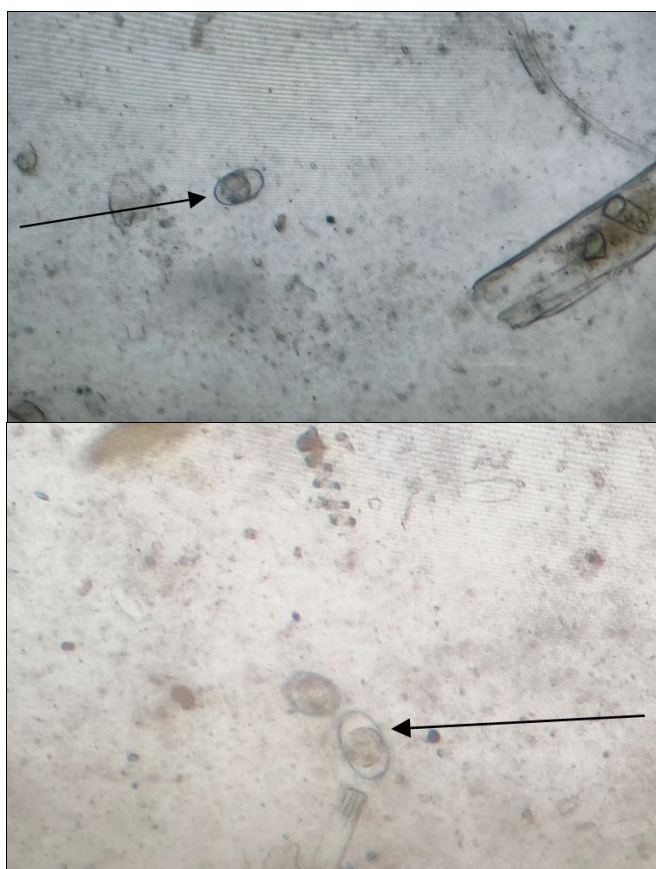


**Fig. 2** Microscopic identification of *Eimeria* spp. oocysts

### Treatment

Sulfaquinoxaline may also be given in the feed at 0.025% for 20 days. A single oral dose of sulfadimethoxine at 30 mg/kg was found to significantly reduce fecal oocyst count.

### Discussion

Intestinal coccidia cause severe disease in rabbits and the severity depends on the infective dose, parasite species,

immune status and age of animals. Adult rabbits are usually symptomless carriers of coccidian infections (Coudert *et al.*, 2000) [1]. The clinical signs of the disease depend on its location. Intestinal coccidiosis results in weight loss, soft to watery feces, blood in feces, dehydration, increased thirst, and sometimes death. Symptoms can range from no visible symptoms to loss of appetite, failure to gain weight, depression, swollen belly, abdominal pain, pale mucus membranes and diarrhea. Findings from this study suggest that the mothers may play an important role in *Eimeria* transmission to the litters. The high level of susceptibility of infection in young rabbits may be due to their immune, feeding and reproductive status (Ebtesam, 2008) [2]. Coccidiosis is considered to be a major problem in rabbits as mortality rate may go high particularly during and after rainy season (Singla *et al.*, 2000) [8]. Present study report was also reported that higher chances of infection occur during rainy season. In this study also we find only emaciation associated with diarrhoea. Preventive measures include strict hygiene, reduction of environmental contamination, and strategic chemoprophylaxis remain essential for long-term control. Sanitation and husbandry are the most important aspects in controlling the infection.

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