

Safety precautions:

- Avoid contact with raccoons and their feces.
- Eliminate food sources in backyards to discourage visiting raccoons.
- Discourage raccoons as pets.
- Contaminated materials should be removed and burned. Concrete and other non-flammable surfaces may be decontaminated by flaming with a propane torch or with boiling Lysol.
- Use disposable gloves, boots, and a dust mask when disposing of contaminated materials such as wood, straw, etc. Such materials should be burned or deeply buried in a site remote from houses

Sources:

Kazacos, KR, 1983. Raccoon Roundworms (*Baylisascaris procyonis*). A cause of animal and human disease. Bulletin 422. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue Univ. Agricultural Experiment Station; 1-25.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 1998. *Baylisascaris procyonis*. <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us>

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Raccoon Roundworm

(Baylisascaris procyonis)



**WHAT YOU SHOULD
KNOW ABOUT IT**

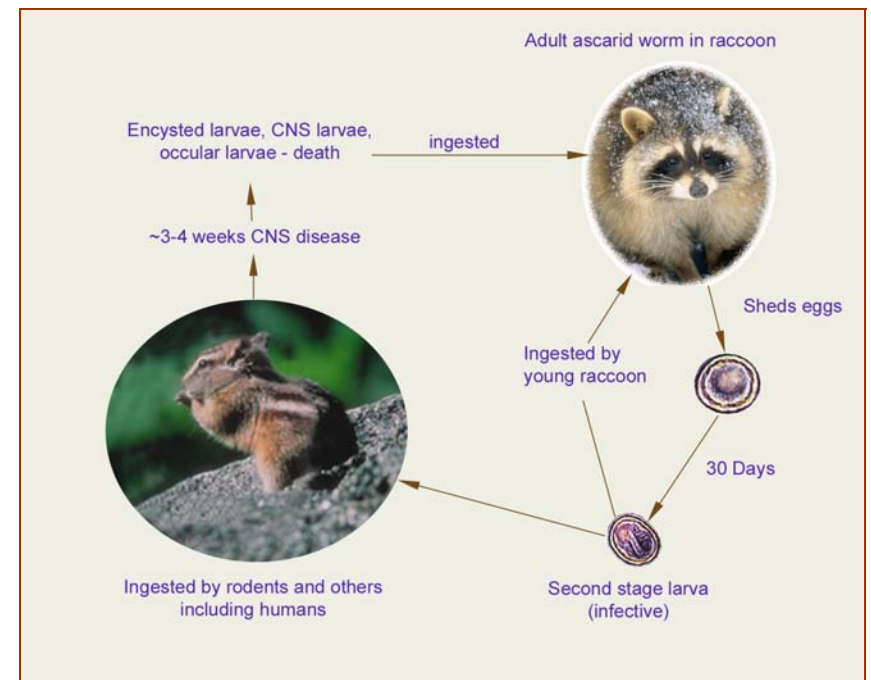
Description

The common raccoon roundworm is a close relative of the dog and cat roundworm (*Toxocara canis* and *T. cati*) and has a similar life cycle. The adult worm lives in the raccoon's intestines. The female can produce thousands to millions of eggs per day. The eggs are passed in the host's feces and become infective in 14 to 30 days and may survive from months to years. When ingested by raccoons, they hatch in the stomach and, as larvae, migrate via the circulatory system back to the intestine where they reach adulthood.

Although this parasite is relatively harmless to the raccoon, serious illness can occur in humans when embryonated (infective) eggs are accidentally ingested. Ingested eggs hatch in the small intestine, penetrate the intestinal wall and migrate to the liver via portal circulation and subsequently to lungs and other tissues via systemic circulation. If larvae migrate to the eye, brain, or spinal cord, there can be severe and irreversible damage due to mechanical damage and inflammatory reactions. Ocular larval migrans, most common in adults, can cause blindness. Neural larval migrans may cause nervous system disease or death. Laser surgery has been successfully used to treat ocular larval migrans, otherwise, once contracted the parasite is not treatable.

Symptoms usually appear 1 to 3 weeks post-infection, but may take as long as 2 months, depending on the number of eggs ingested. Symptoms include nausea, lethargy, liver enlargement, lack of coordination, loss of muscle control, coma, and blindness.

Vector-Borne Diseases Program staff has determined that the raccoon roundworm parasite is present in raccoons living in the Truckee Meadows area.



Raccoon Roundworm Life Cycle