

Neosporosis



Photo: Andrew Peregrine, Department of Pathobiology, Ontario Veterinary College, used with permission.

CAUSE: Neosporosis (nee AH spo ROE sis) is caused by *Neospora caninum*, a protozoan parasite similar to the ones that cause coccidiosis and toxoplasmosis.

EFFECT: Neosporosis is associated with early embryonic loss and abortion in cattle. Fetuses carried to term may fail to thrive or appear normal but carry the infection. A related protozoan, *Toxoplasma*, causes abortions in sheep.

How is Neospora spread? This disease is transmitted vertically, from one generation to the next, by cows passing the infection on to their offspring in utero. Carcasses, placentas, and aborted fetuses can spread the protozoan. Dogs are implicated in completing the cycle of development of the protozoan. (Cats complete the life cycle of *Toxoplasma gondii*.) Mechanisms of postnatal infection are unknown.

How can Neospora be prevented? Ensure that all feed and water sources are protected from feces of dogs. Dispose of potentially infected carcasses, placentas, and fetuses immediately and appropriately.

Does Neospora affect people? No, Neospora is not known to be transmissible to humans.

What if there is an outbreak? Any time there are an unusual number of abortions or unexplained decline in conception rate, appropriate diagnostic tests should be done. Your veterinarian can advise you on managing the disease if neosporosis is diagnosed.

For more information on Neospora, see:

[USDA ARS: Neosporosis](#)

[Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory: Neosporosis](#)

[The Merck Veterinary Manual: Neosporosis](#)