Amphibiocystidium Parasitic Disease

Agent

*Amphibiocystidium* is a genus of single-celled parasitic organisms which are sometimes referred to as *Dermocystidium*, although this latter term is increasingly restricted to similar parasites that infect fish.

Species affected

*Amphibiocystidium* parasitic disease has been reported in a range of amphibians, including frogs, toads, newts and salamanders. There is evidence that some species may be more susceptible to infection than others, but all amphibians should be considered at risk.

Signs of disease

Infection with *Amphibiocystidium* parasites can cause a range of disease outcomes. Most often, infection results in the development of nodular skin lesions that are visible to the naked eye. These vary from small blisters to large tumour-like lesions, which can become red and ulcerated. *Amphibiocystidium* skin lesions can occur anywhere on the body, including the head, tail and legs (see Figures 1 and 2). Sometimes, the lesions are clustered around the vent, or cloaca, of the animals. Additionally, the parasite can infect the liver, in which it forms tumour-like lesions of varying sizes.

The effect of *Amphibiocystidium* infection on individual animals ranges from mild disease with recovery, to death.

Disease transmission

The lifecycle of *Amphibiocystidium* parasites is virtually unknown. How the parasite is transmitted from one animal to another is also unknown.

Distribution

Disease consistent with *Amphibiocystidium* infection was first described in Europe in the beginning of the 20th Century in frogs and newts. Since then it has also been found in North America. There has been an increase in the
numbers of reports of amphibians infected with *Amphibiocystidium* in recent years in Great Britain and elsewhere in Europe, but this might be because of a large increase in the number of people who are studying amphibian diseases.

In Great Britain *Amphibiocystidium* parasitic disease has been found in both native and introduced species of newts in multiple sites across the country.

**Risk to human health**

*Amphibiocystidium* parasites are only known to infect amphibians. There is no known risk to human health.

**Risk to domestic animals**

*Amphibiocystidium* parasites are only known to infect amphibians. As such, pet amphibians should be regarded as being susceptible to infection.

**Diagnosis**

A tentative diagnosis of *Amphibiocystidium* parasitic disease can often be made based on the appearance of the lesions found in affected amphibians. A definitive diagnosis can only be made, however, using specialist laboratory tests.

If you wish to report finding a dead amphibian, or signs of disease in amphibians, please visit **www.gardenwildlifehealth.org**. Alternatively, if you have further queries or have no internet access, please call the Garden Wildlife Health vets on **0207 449 6685**.

**Control and prevention**

There are no known effective treatments for *Amphibiocystidium* parasitic disease. The movement of infected animals should be avoided to help prevent the unintentional spread of the parasite to new areas.

**Further information**

More advice on amphibians in your garden can be found on the Garden Wildlife Health website **www.gardenwildlifehealth.org**.

**Scientific publications**


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