

IDENTIFYING THE THREE THIEVES:

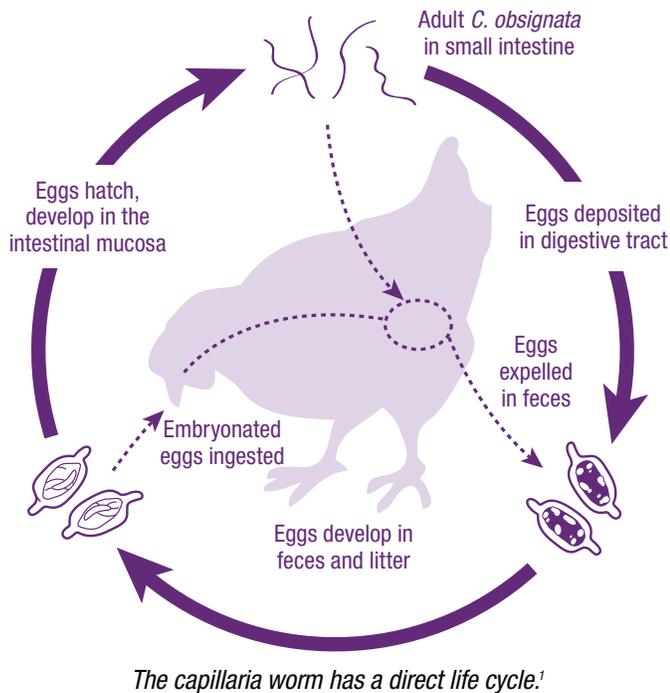
Capillaria worms

Capillaria obsignata: Small, white, smooth worm approximately 1 cm long, but very small in diameter; also known as the thread worm.¹

Life cycle¹

- Worm eggs pass from the chicken via feces, moving on to the litter where they embryonate.
- Birds ingest the eggs and they hatch in the upper small intestine, particularly the duodenal loop.
- The worms then burrow deep into the mucosa of the small intestine, causing severe irritation and damage.¹
- The prepatent period of the capillaria worm is 21-28 days.

Capillaria worm life cycle



Signs and clinical significance¹

Capillaria infections cause extensive mucosal damage and resulting irritation. Emaciation, diarrhea, huddling and secondary disorders associated with malnutrition have also been noted as consequences of an infection. Studies cite reduced egg production and changes in egg shell quality as a common clinical sign.¹ Upon necropsy, catarrhal enteritis may be noted.

Diagnosis

Clinical signs may be suggestive of parasitism. Due to the size of the worm and the fact that it burrows deep into the mucosa of the small intestine, visual examination of the worm in the intestinal tract is often not possible. The use of a worm screen with an intestinal scraping is often necessary to determine the presence and severity of the capillaria infection.

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¹ Saif, Y. 2003. Diseases of Poultry 11th Edition: 943-948.
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