

CRYPTOSPORIDIA

The cross-transmission potential of

***Cryptosporidium* spp.**

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Infections by the sporozoan parasite *Cryptosporidium* may cause clinical disease in a wide variety of vertebrate hosts, involving diarrhoea in mammals, respiratory signs in birds, gastritis in reptiles and enteritis in fish. Multiple species have been described on the basis of parasite morphology and host occurrence.

Experimental studies have shown that infections in mammals may be transmitted to other mammalian species (including man) thereby establishing their cross-transmission (and zoonotic) potential. Infections in birds, reptiles and fish have been transmitted to other species within the same vertebrate class but cross-transmission between classes has not been reported.

Six *Cryptosporidium* spp. are currently regarded as valid: two in mammals, two in birds, one in reptiles and one in fish. However, recent genetic studies have detected cryptic species in several classes thereby further confounding their taxonomy.