

## Raccoon roundworm

*Prelims: Current events of national and international importance*

### Why in News?

*A dangerous raccoon roundworm is spreading across Europe, causing severe brain damage and blindness in rare human cases.*

- Raccoon roundworm is a ***parasitic nematode (roundworm)*** primarily found in raccoons, but it can infect humans and other animals.

*Raccoons are adaptable omnivorous mammal's native to North America, recognised for their masked face and role as hosts for certain zoonotic parasites.*

- **Scientific Name** - Baylisascaris procyonis.
- This parasite starts life in raccoon intestines, where adult worms pump out millions of eggs that end up in faeces.
- **Transmission** - Those eggs toughen up in soil for weeks, surviving for years and waiting for an unlucky host to swallow them, perhaps through dirty hands or contaminated water.
- **Symptoms in humans** - The larvae hatch and wander, burrowing into tissues, eyes, or worst of all, the brain.
- Symptoms can mimic other illnesses like nausea, fatigue, even blindness or fatal brain damage.
- **Vulnerables** - Children, who love playing in dirt, face the biggest risk.
- **Global Spread** - Raccoons are native to North America and only pop up here as rare smuggling cases or accidental stowaways in shipping containers.
- It has firmly taken hold in wild raccoons across 9 countries, with Germany at the epicentre.
- Infection rates as high as 77% in some regions, and urban raccoons are bringing the parasite closer to people than ever before.
- Europe has already seen 3 confirmed cases leading to permanent vision

loss.

***India*** has no wild raccoons as of now.

## Reference

[India Today | Raccoon roundworm](#)

