

You, Your Pet & Intestinal Parasites



It is fairly common for your pet to become infected with an internal parasite during his or her lifetime. These pesky parasites can affect your loved one in many ways, sometimes even causing serious health problems. Learn the facts about these common parasites and how you can help protect yourself, your family and your pets.

Roundworms

are the most common intestinal parasite found in dogs and cats. Dogs and cats can become infected with roundworms in numerous ways. Most commonly, infection occurs through a nursing mother, your cat (or dog) eating a host (i.e rodents, bird, cockroach, earthworm ...) and through contact with contaminated feces and soil.

Roundworms can pose a significant risk to people. Contact with contaminated soil or animal feces could result in the ingestion of the roundworm eggs and subsequent infection. Children are especially at risk. Keep your pet's living area clean, remove feces regularly, and keep litter boxes clean. If possible, keep cats indoors to prevent them from eating host animals that may carry parasites.

Tapeworms

are long, flat, segmented worms. Tapeworm infections are usually diagnosed by finding the segments (may look like grains of rice or white seeds) in your pet's feces, bedding, or fur around their rear. Tapeworm infections develop from ingesting fleas, flea eggs, and small rodents; such as, mice and squirrels.

Source: Companion Animal Parasite Council, www.petsandparasites.org

Hookworm

larvae hatch from eggs that live in the soil and can affect animals and people through skin contact. Pets will also become infected through ingestion of infected dirt through routine cleaning (licking). Hookworms attach to the intestinal lining and feed on a host's blood. Hookworms pose a serious health risk. As with other parasites, keeping your pets surroundings clean is key in preventing hookworm infestation.

Whipworms

are one of the four most common intestinal parasites. Animals will become infected with whipworms by ingestion of the eggs through infested soil or feces. Whipworms are sometimes more difficult to diagnose than other intestinal parasites. Prevention and routine testing are key in keeping your pet protected against whipworms.

Coccidia

are a common protozoal parasite that live in a dog's intestinal walls. More commonly affecting puppies, coccidia can lead to Coccidiosis, an intestinal disease that causes diarrhea. Severe infections cause bloody diarrhea and can become serious when affecting puppies. Because coccidia are found most often in puppies, it is important to have puppies routinely examined for parasites with a fecal test. If your dog is infected with coccidia, our veterinarian is able to give it effective medications.

Prevention

It is important to have your dog or cat routinely tested for intestinal parasites. Often pets in the early stages of infection may show no symptoms. Keep your pet on a monthly heartworm prevention as most of these products also provide a monthly deworming for intestinal parasites.

We can help you choose the right parasite prevention program for your pet. Talk to our staff, today!