

WORMING YOUR PET

Worms are a common parasite and affect almost all pets at some stage in their lives. As long as an infection is treated early, it is unlikely to cause serious harm to an adult pet but worms can cause more significant health problems in puppies and in kittens. They can occasionally be passed on to humans and, in rare cases, are known to have caused blindness in children (*Toxocara canis*) which is why it is important to remove faeces from childrens' play areas.

Talk to us about implementing a regular preventative regime to reduce the risk of worms.

What types of worm infect dogs and cats?

The most common worms in dogs and cats are roundworms and tapeworms.

Roundworms are rarely seen tiny threads - though they can grow up to 15 cm in length. If your dog or cat eats roundworm eggs while outside - something that is almost inevitable - they will develop into adult worms in the intestine and start laying eggs. The eggs are then passed in your animal's faeces into the environment so that the whole cycle starts again. Almost all puppies and kittens acquire roundworms from their mother, unless they have been carefully treated.

Tapeworms look like ribbons and are made up of individual segments, each resembling a grain of rice. If your pet has a tapeworm, you may spot the segments around his or her bottom. Fleas carry tapeworms so ingesting fleas while grooming is a common source of tapeworm infection in dogs and cats. Hunting cats are also at greater risk because they may consume infected prey.

Lungworm is also starting to become more common in dogs and is potentially very serious. Lungworm is picked up when dogs eat infected snails or slugs. They then develop in the dog's heart or major blood vessels.

What signs should you look out for?

With a heavy infestation of worms, your pet may lose weight, lose interest in food and appear dehydrated. Diarrhoea and anaemia can occur and sometimes an infected animal's stomach can feel distended. You may even spot worms in your pet's faeces. Tapeworms sometimes cause pets to be sick and you may notice the small segments in the vomit. Lungworm causes a wide variety of problems but can include coughing, breathlessness and bleeding.

Protecting your pet from worms

When you worm your pet, the treatment will kill the worms inside them but, as you can't prevent them from then picking up more worm eggs in the outside world, it is important to repeat the treatment regularly, especially if you have small children. There is a wide range of very effective products available and we will advise you on the most appropriate preventative regime for your animal.

You can help to reduce the risk of worms being passed from animal to animal or from pet to people by:

- Checking your pet regularly for fleas & following a strict preventative flea treatment regime.
- Disinfecting cat litter trays every 3-4 days.
- Always removing your pet's faeces and disposing of them in a bin.
- Making sure that children wash their hands after playing in open areas frequented by animals.

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