

Intestinal Parasites

**Parasite checks are very important for your pet. Many parasites can cause health risks if left untreated. Health risks include vomiting, weight loss, diarrhea, and occasionally even death. This test should be done at a minimum of once a year. A piece of feces that is no more than 6 hours old is needed to complete the test. The sample should be refrigerated (DO NOT FREEZE) if you are unable to have it tested within an hour.*

Dewormings: All puppies and kitties should be dewormed at least once before 16 weeks of age. Dewormers are available in topical, liquid, or pill form and the dosage will depend on your animal's weight. Each dewormer also treats different types of parasites so it is important to use the right one.

ROUNDWORMS....are the most common type of intestinal worm. They are 2-4 inches long and resemble strands of spaghetti. They live in the small intestines, and may cause vomiting, diarrhea, or weight loss. Larval worms also damage the liver and lungs while migrating through these organs on their way to the small intestines. Roundworms are transmitted via stools of other infected animals or through the uterus of the mother. Entire worms can sometimes be seen in the stools or vomitus. Just one adult female roundworm sheds hundreds of infective eggs into the feces every day. The yard of a pet with roundworms is usually contaminated with millions of eggs.

HOOKWORMS....are half inch long worms which attach to the lining of the small intestine, causing blood loss and diarrhea. Puppies/kitties can be infected through the mother's uterus before birth, or via her milk after birth. Older animals acquire hookworms through skin contact with the stools of other animals. Hookworm larvae cause skin disease in people.

WHIPWORMS....live in the large intestine. They are not as common as the other intestinal parasites but the disease they cause can be very serious. Bloody diarrhea and weight loss are the symptoms seen. These worms are transmitted by ingestion of the stools of infested animals.

TAPEWORMS....live in the small intestines where the head attaches to the intestinal wall and produce a chain of segments. Mature segments containing eggs are passed with the stool or may be seen around the rectum. They resemble small grains of rice. They may be acquired by the ingestion of rodents or birds, or most commonly through the ingestion of fleas. Flea control is essential to control tapeworms.

COCCIDIA....are one celled protazoal parasites, more like bacteria rather than "worms". Puppies/kitties can pick these up from their mother and they can also be acquired by eating rabbit or other wildlife droppings.

GIARDIA....are also protozoans. They are very difficult to pick up on a regular stool check. Antibiotics or special wormers kill them but they are difficult to eradicate completely and often flare up with stress or the presence of other intestinal parasites. They cause vomiting and diarrhea in both people and pets.

