

**H**ookworms, roundworms, and other parasites are everywhere in your pet's environment.

With today's effective preventive and treatment methods, however, no pet needs to suffer from internal parasite infestation.



**Every pet owner should know:**

- **No pet is completely safe from parasites.**

Young and/or outdoor pets are particularly at risk.

- **They can make your pet very ill.**

Pets can also transmit certain parasites to you and to your family.

- **Parasites are easy to prevent and treat.**

Safe, proven medications are available that can keep your pet worm free. Ask your VCA veterinarian for specific recommendations.

## Q & A

### **What are the main problem parasites for pets?**

Roundworm, hookworm, tapeworm, whipworm, *Coccidia*, *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium* are all common in cats and dogs.

### **How will my veterinarian test for parasites?**

Basic screening tests can be done using fecal samples. However, two intestinal parasites, *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium*, are particularly difficult to diagnose and are usually tested for at special diagnostic laboratories.

Early diagnosis is important because these parasites can cause significant illness and can also be transmitted to humans.

### **Do I need to deworm my new puppy or kitten?**

Unfortunately, by the age of 6 to 8 weeks, most puppies and kittens are already infected with worms transmitted by their mothers. That's why most veterinarians recommend that puppies and kittens be routinely treated with deworming medications.

While there are many safe medications, the wrong treatment can make your new pet ill. Ask your VCA veterinarian's advice.

## Parasite Control For Your Dog and Cat

How to prevent and treat harmful infestations



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# Parasite Control For Your Pet

*Magnified sample of a Hookworm*

## A serious but highly treatable problem

Intestinal parasites can lead to general ill health, vomiting and/or diarrhea, a weakened immune system, massive blood loss (from hookworms), anemia, intestinal obstruction, and, in severe cases, death.

With today's safe and effective deworming products, however, no pet needs to suffer from an intestinal parasite infestation.

### How pets become infected

Infective worm eggs or larvae are found in a pet's feces or body tissues.

Pets become infested when they eat or lick the infected material. In some cases, larvae can infect your pet by directly penetrating his or her skin.

Pets that are allowed to roam freely, or those that play in public parks or other areas frequented by large numbers of other animals, are at higher risk of contracting these parasites.

Pets can also become infected by drinking contaminated water.

### The risk to humans

Common roundworms, hookworms, tapeworms, *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium* are all transmittable

to humans and can cause allergies, gastrointestinal problems, or even organ damage.

Children, because of their play habits and affinity for pets, are particularly at risk for infection, making parasite prevention all the more crucial.

## How to protect your pet

To prevent infestation, your veterinarian will recommend a regular schedule for examinations of your pet's stool.

In some regions of the United States, pets of all ages should be wormed regularly (every 3 to 4 months) with a veterinarian-recommended deworming medication. Additional preventive measures include:

- Follow your veterinarian's advice regarding flea control to help prevent tapeworms.
- Do not allow your pet to roam freely or spend time in areas that are heavily contaminated with the feces of other pets.
- Do not allow your pet to drink brackish or standing water.
- Clean up your pet's stool on a regular basis.

There are a variety of medications available that can be used to keep your pet worm free. Many require simple, topical applications just once a month. Ask your VCA veterinarian for specific recommendations for your pet.

### VCA Pet Tip:

Frequent hand washing, especially after working or playing in soil – combined with following your veterinarian's recommendations regarding parasite prevention – will help prevent any accidental infections in you or your family.



## How to tell if your pet has worms

Pets can have parasites and yet may not have any symptoms. This is why routine testing is so important.

The following may be visible signs of a parasite infestation in your pet:

- Loss of body condition
- Lethargy
- Vomiting and dry heaving
- Coughing
- Diarrhea and/or malodorous stool
- Bloating or distended abdomen
- Anal irritation (including itching, biting, and "scooting")
- Flatulence
- Inappropriate elimination
- Poor appetite
- Weight loss or inability to gain weight
- Worms in the feces or on the coat near the anus or tail