



INTERNAL PARASITES

A clean environment helps control parasite infestation. Fresh water, clean bowls, clean litter boxes and a clean yard are very important in controlling worms, and should be attended to daily. Annual stool tests are recommended to detect silent parasite infestation because many times there are not outward signs. Another approach is to use ongoing parasite management to prevent infections from starting. Ask your veterinarian to discuss the available options with you.

Roundworms are long white worms between 4 and 8 inches long living in the small intestine. Kittens and puppies with roundworm infestations will appear to have "pot-bellies". The worm causes loose stools and can slow the growth of the young animal. Animals get roundworms from eating the eggs in contaminated stools or migration from mother to fetus or newborns.

Hookworms are one inch long blood sucking parasites. They attach to the intestinal wall and cause internal bleeding. A heavy infestation can cause anemia. Stools will be a tar black color. These parasites enter the animal's system by penetrating the skin, or through contaminated food or water. Dogs can also get hookworms from their mother's milk.

Whipworms are 2.5 inches long living in the lower digestive tract. Symptoms range from nothing to reddish watery diarrhea. A clean environment is important in controlling this parasite. The eggs can live for many months outside the host (your pet.)

Tapeworms look like pieces of rice. Dogs and cats get tapeworms from eating rodents or fleas. Flea control and periodic parasite checks are the most effective ways to control tapeworms, the most common parasite in cats and dogs.

Giardia and coccidia are Protozoa. Both parasites can cause severe diarrhea, sanitation is very important to control these.

Toxoplasma is also a Protozoa. Cats can get toxoplasma from an infected mouse. It attacks the immune system. For this reason, it is very important to wear gloves when gardening or cleaning the cat box. Women who are pregnant should avoid contact with cat feces.

HUMAN HEALTH ISSUES

Roundworms, hookworms, and toxoplasma can infect humans. Have your pet's stool checked at least once a year. If you have any questions regarding your own health, please contact your primary care physician.