



Intestinal Parasites

Intestinal parasites are worms and micro-organisms that live in the intestines of dogs and cats. These include roundworms, hookworms, whipworms, coccidia, and giardia. **Some of these parasites are zoonotic and may, under certain circumstances, be transmissible to people.** They are very important to detect and treat in pets.

How do I know if my pet has intestinal parasites?

- * Intestinal Parasites can cause diarrhea, vomiting, lack of energy, anemia, stunted growth and poor hair coat. In severe cases, death of the pet may be caused by parasites.
- * Some pets show few symptoms but may be spreading intestinal parasites with their infective stool to other pets and people.
- * The only way to diagnose intestinal parasites in your pet is to have a fresh fecal sample microscopically analyzed. One type of parasite, the tapeworm, may be detected by looking under your pet's tail for white segments that resemble a grain of rice.

Is my pet at risk for intestinal parasites?

- * Puppies and kittens can be born with worms, so all puppies and kittens should have fecal samples checked more than once.
- * Adult dogs and cats can pick up intestinal parasites from coming in contact with other infected pets' stool. They can also become infected by eating rodents, rabbits, or squirrels. The soil of any environment can also contain parasitic eggs that can then affect the adult pet.
- * Intestinal parasites are so abundant in the environment that all pets are exposed to intestinal parasites and are at risk for infection.

How is my pet treated if it has intestinal parasites?

- * Once the diagnosis of the specific intestinal parasite is made, a medication is prescribed that will kill that parasite. This may include pills, liquid, or injections.
- * After the medication is completed, a stool sample will again be tested to see if all the intestinal parasites have been killed. Sometimes multiple treatments are needed depending on the type of parasite(s) and life cycle of the parasite(s).

How do I prevent my pet from acquiring intestinal parasite infections?

- * Monthly medications can be given that prevent an infection of some of the intestinal parasites. These medications can also prevent heartworm disease and flea infestations.
- * Good sanitation practices including keeping yards free of stool will help decrease the risk of infection or re-infection. All new pets to an environment should be tested and found to be negative before being allowed to interact with other pets.
- * Some intestinal parasites are hard to prevent due to the large numbers in the environment, so fecal samples should be checked often.