

Intestinal Parasites

Worms & More Worms

There are many different internal parasites ('worms') that can live inside your pet. Prevention of these creatures is important for your pet's health, and in some instances for your family's health as well.

Intestinal Worms/Parasites

There are many types of worms that can live in your pet's intestinal tract and some can cause serious illnesses.

Hookworms - are very small and live in the small intestine. They suck blood and can cause anemia and/or vomiting, weight loss, stunted growth, etc. Puppies/kittens are especially prone to this type of worm.

Roundworms - resemble pieces of spaghetti. These are also very common in puppies/kittens. These are the worms that can give your pet a pot-bellied appearance.

Whipworms - live in the large intestine and cause anemia, weight loss, and sometimes bloody diarrhea. They are difficult to detect on a fecal exam.

Tapeworms - are first eaten by an intermediate host such as a rabbit or flea! The pet then ingests the flea/rabbit and the developing

tapeworms mature inside your pet. Tapeworm infections are often easy to spot because of the white, rice-like segments in your pet's stool or attached to hair near their tail.

Most intestinal worms pass their eggs through your pet's feces into the soil. Some of these parasites also pose a human health risk because they can be transmitted to you from your pet or infected soil.

Heartworms

These worms live in a dog's or cat's heart and adjoining blood vessels. Infection is spread by mosquitoes. (Heartworms were discussed in more detail in a previous newsletter.)

Fecal Examinations

A fecal exam is recommended at least once a year to screen for parasite infections. Eggs of different types of worms are passed with the feces. The presence and type of worms can be determined with an examination under a microscope.

Unfortunately, a fecal exam can sometimes be negative even if worms are present. The eggs must be currently shedding in the feces in order to find them with a fecal exam. That is why

preventative measures and frequent fecal examinations are important.

PREVENTION

Preventative medicine is the foundation to helping our pets live happier and healthier lives. Strategic parasite prevention is an important part of preventative health care for your dog or cat.

There are several different products available to prevent and control different types of parasites: heartworms, intestinal worms, fleas, ticks, ear mites, etc. Talk to your veterinarian about which product(s) best suit your individual animal's needs and lifestyle.

Other guidelines for parasite prevention:

- * Don't let your pet play in areas heavily frequented by other dogs.
- * Keep environment free of fleas since they can harbor tapeworm eggs.
- * Keep children away from dog play areas and feces. Make sure to follow good hygiene practices, such as washing hands.
- * Change your pet's bedding frequently and wash it during hot weather.
- * Clean up dog stools before they break down in the soil.
- * Have a complete physical, heartworm test and fecal flotation exam done by your veterinarian at least once a year.