

Protecting Your Pet and Family From Fleas, Worms and Internal Parasites

Dogs and cats are frequently infected with internal parasites (worms). The most common worms are TAPEWORMS, ROUNDWORMS, GIARDIA, HOOKWORMS, WHIPWORMS AND COCCIDIA.

TAPEWORMS are seen as off-white, rice like segments in the pet's feces or anal area. Pets get tapeworm infection via fleas or rodents. They are six to 10 inches long and live in the pet's intestine. Treatment consists of a gentle dewormer called Droncit, either as an injection or by tablets.

Puppies and kittens may be infected with ROUNDWORMS and HOOKWORMS at birth. Adult dogs and cats may get these parasites by eating contaminated soil or by direct penetration of tiny worm larvae through the skin. In San Diego County we have a significant risk with wildlife carrying and spreading internal parasites. Eating undercooked or raw meat is a danger for pets and people as well.

Symptoms of parasitism range from lethargy to diarrhea, vomiting, weight loss and severe weakness. Parasites may cause severe anemia, coughs and even death. However, some pets will be infected and have no symptoms at all.

Not only can these worms cause illness in pets, but can infect people, too! Roundworm larvae can migrate in a person's body resulting in a disease called "Visceral Larvae Migrants". Hookworms can cause "Cutaneous Larve Migrants". Children are most at risk. The center for Disease Control has asked veterinarians to inform our clients, especially parents of young children, about the risks of parasite transmission to people.

Detection of internal parasites is not difficult. We recommend a yearly microscopic fecal test for all pets. Occasionally parasites are visible in the feces to the naked eye...but most often they are not. That's the reason for a microscopic exam.

Here are the "rules" of parasite prevention:

1. Regular clean up and disposal of animal feces.
2. Keep your pets' flea free.
3. Never eat undercooked meat or feed your pets raw meat.
4. Have your pet's feces tested microscopically once a year.
5. Use a monthly prescription medication recommended by your veterinarian to control and prevent intestinal parasites, fleas and heartworms.