

Intestinal Parasites

Intestinal parasites are very common in pets, and many are also transmissible to people. It is very easy for animals to contract parasites through their environment, fortunately, these parasites are often easily preventable. Puppies and kittens are commonly infected with parasites and will receive a dose of a broad-spectrum dewormer at each visit to our office. It is also recommended to check a stool sample at each visit to screen for parasites that may not be covered by the dewormer. Your pet should also receive monthly parasite prevention year-round, as they may be exposed to parasites throughout their lifetime. By keeping your pet on a monthly prevention schedule, you protect not only them but also your family from unwanted parasites.

Roundworm

Roundworms are one of the most common intestinal parasites found in dogs and cats. A mother dog or cat who has had roundworms at any time in the past can transmit them to her puppies or kittens before birth. Another major source of roundworm infection for puppies and kittens is the mother's milk. Pets may also become infected by swallowing roundworm eggs in their environment through contaminated soil or by ingesting a host animal such as a rodent, earthworm, or certain insects.

Hookworm

Hookworms are tiny intestinal parasites named for the hook-like mouth parts they use to attach to the intestinal wall. They can also be transmitted to puppies and kittens from their mother or ingested from their environment.

Tapeworm

Tapeworms are long, flat worms that attach themselves to your pet's intestines. Tapeworm infections are usually diagnosed by finding these segments—which often resemble white grains of rice—in your pet's stool, on their rear end, or on their bedding. To become infected with tapeworms, your pet must ingest a flea that contains tapeworm eggs.

Whipworms

Whipworms are parasites that live in the cecum (where the small and large intestine meet) and colon, where they cause severe irritation to the lining of those organs that can result in watery, bloody diarrhea and weight loss. Pets become infected by ingesting these eggs in soil or other contaminated substances in the environment. Whipworm eggs are very resistant to drying and heat, allowing them to remain viable in your pet's environment for years. This means that whipworms can remain present in your yard and, if not on proper preventatives, your pet can continue to become re-infected despite proper treatment.

Coccidia

Coccidia is a single-celled organism that can infect cats and dogs through contact with fecal matter containing the parasite. A pet can become infected by eating contaminated soil, drinking contaminated water, or licking paws and fur that has come in contact with infected feces. After infection, coccidia travels to the intestines and destroys the intestinal lining, which prevents absorption of nutrients. Coccidia is very contagious to puppies and kittens, so frequently cleaning up feces to prevent contamination is especially important around young pets.

Giardia

Giardia is another single-celled intestinal parasite that can infect dogs and cats. Infection is

caused by ingesting giardia through contact with contaminated food, water, or soil. Like coccidia, giardia travels to the intestines and damages the lining of the intestinal wall, reducing the absorption of nutrients.