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# INTERNAL PARASITES

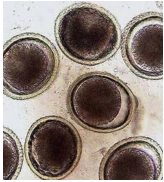
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## Roundworms | Hookworms | Whipworms | Tapeworms

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### What are roundworms and how are they spread?

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Roundworms are the most common intestinal parasite in dogs and cats in the world. Animals with roundworms pass the infection to other animals when the worm eggs are passed in the animals feces. Your pet can pick up the infection by eating infected soil, licking contaminated fur or paws, or by drinking contaminated water. It is also possible for female dogs to pass the infection to their puppies before birth or after when they are nursing. Infected female cats cannot infect their kittens before birth, but can pass on the infection through their milk when kittens are nursing.

### *What are the health risks to pets and people?*

Puppies and kittens are the most prone to roundworm infection. Because roundworms live in the small intestine, they steal the nutrients from the food your pet eats, which can lead to malnutrition and intestinal problems. As the larvae move through a pet's body, young animals may develop serious respiratory problems such as pneumonia.

Roundworm infections are zoonotic, meaning that they are animal diseases that can be transmitted to humans. Most infections come from accidental ingestion of the worm larvae or from larvae that enter through the skin. For example, children are at risk for infection if they play in areas that may contain infected feces, such as dirt piles and sandboxes. Roundworms in people can cause serious health problems when the larvae enter organs and other tissues, resulting in lung, brain, or liver damage.

### What are hookworms and how are they spread?

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Hookworms are the second most common intestinal parasites found in dogs, but they are less commonly found in cats. Your pet can become infected when larvae penetrate the animal's skin or the lining of the mouth. An infected female dog can pass the infection to her puppies through her milk, but this does not occur in cats.

### *What are the health risks to pets and people?*

Hookworms are dangerous parasites because they actually bite into the intestinal lining of an animal and suck their blood. As with roundworms, puppies and kittens are at high risk of infection and severe secondary disease. Left untreated, hookworm infections can result in potentially life-threatening blood loss, weakness, and malnutrition.

Like roundworms, hookworm infections are also zoonotic and usually occur through accidental ingestion of larvae or by larvae entering through the skin. In humans, hookworm infections cause health problems when the larvae penetrate the skin. The larvae produce severe itching and tunnel-like, red areas as they move through the skin. If accidentally eaten, hookworms can cause intestinal problems.

## What are whipworms and how are they spread?

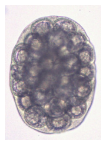


These worms get their name from their whip-like shape. Animals with whipworms pass the infection along to other animals when the worm eggs develop into larvae and are passed in their feces. Your pet can pick up the infection by eating infected soil or licking their contaminated fur or paws.

### *What are the health risks to pets and people?*

Like hookworms, whipworms bury their heads into the lining of an animal's intestine and suck blood, but they are generally less harmful. Severe infections can develop and lead to diarrhea, weight loss, and blood loss. Whipworm larvae rarely infect humans when they are accidentally eaten.

## What are tapeworms and how are they spread?



Tapeworms get their name because they are thin and flat, like strips of tape. Unlike the smooth bodies roundworms, hookworms, and whipworms, tapeworms' bodies are actually made up of joined segments. Dogs and cats become infected with tapeworms when they eat infected fleas or rodents.

### *What are the health risks to pets and people?*

Tapeworms live in the small intestine and steal the nutrients from the food your dog or cat eats. An infection is usually diagnosed when the egg sacs are seen under the pet's tail or on its stool. These sacs look like flattened grains of rice. Rarely are tapeworms a risk to people.

### **Important Points about Internal Parasites:**

- Seek advice from the veterinarians at PAWS Atlanta Veterinary Clinic if your pet has diarrhea, weight loss, increased scooting, a dull coat, or if you see worms under the tail, in its bedding, or on its stool.
- Prompt treatment of internal parasites lessens your pet's discomfort, decreases the chances of intestinal damage, and decreases the chance that your pet will infect humans or other animals.
- Good hygiene and sanitation reduce the chance that your pet will infect people or animals. You can help prevent the spread of infection by always cleaning up your pet's droppings immediately.
- In most cases, a simple fecal test can detect the presence of worm eggs and the veterinarians at PAWS Atlanta Veterinary Clinic can recommend a deworming program.
- A good way to prevent most worm infections is by using one of several monthly heartworm preventatives available.