CLIENT HANDOUT

Roundworms and Hookworms: Not Just a Pet Problem

Roundworms and hookworms are 2 different kinds of parasites that can live in the intestines of pets. Under some circumstances, it is possible for people to become infected with these parasites.

DOES MY PET HAVE WORMS?

The most common signs of roundworm or hookworm infection in pets are physical worms in their stool or diarrhea and/or soft stools. More serious signs, such as bloating or pale gums, are seen with more severe infections. However, pets often show no signs of infection, which is why your veterinarian might recommend regular testing for parasites.

CAN I GET WORMS FROM MY PET?

Cats and dogs infected with roundworms or hookworms pass eggs and larvae in their feces, so people can become infected when feces have contaminated the surrounding environment. To become infected with these parasites, a person would have to orally ingest eggs or larvae (young worms), usually from improper handwashing after cleaning up feces. People can also get hookworms by walking barefoot on contaminated soil or playing in contaminated sand.

More information about human infection with these parasites can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: bit.ly/3tPVRq9.

New Africa/Nina Buday

HOW DO I PROTECT MY PET AND FAMILY?

You can best protect your pet against infection by giving them a monthly parasite preventive medication that includes a dewormer. These medications typically contain multiple drugs to protect your pet from heartworms, fleas, ticks, and internal parasites. These medications should be given year-round. Year-round protection is important because it helps stop the shedding of eggs into the environment, which is where the cycle begins. Cleaning up your pet's waste immediately when outside and sifting litterboxes daily is also important.

To protect yourself, the easiest thing you can do is have good hygiene and simply wash your hands well and regularly. Wash your hands with soap and water after cleaning up any stool or handling anything that involves sand, soil, or dirt. If you are concerned that you or a family member may have contracted a parasite from your pet, you should reach out to your primary healthcare provider for diagnostics and treatment immediately.