CLIENT HANDOUT

Keeping Your Pet Safe from Internal Parasites

Why Worry About Parasites? Internal parasites can live in your pet's intestines or even heart, causing health issues ranging from mild discomfort to serious illness. Many of these parasites are also zoonotic, meaning they can be passed to people—especially children and those with compromised immune systems.

Common Internal Parasites: What You Should Know

Roundworms

- Most common in puppies and kittens
- Come from the mother during pregnancy or nursing, from the environment, or from consuming an infected insect or animal
- Can be seen in feces (long, rounded, thin, and white) or diagnosed via fecal testing
- Can infect people

Roundworms can be prevented with routine deworming starting at 2 weeks of age and then year-round parasite protection as recommended by your veterinarian. Keep the environment clean.





Roundworms, shown here and below, are common in young and unprotected pets.

Hookworms

- Come from contaminated environments or from the mother during nursing
- Can penetrate skin or be ingested
- Cause anemia and digestive issues
- Are diagnosed with fecal testing
- Some types can infect people

Regular preventive medication and good hygiene are key to protecting against hookworms.

Whipworms

- More common in dogs than cats
- Come from consuming contaminated materials (e.g., dirt)
- May not cause symptoms until infection is advanced
- Diagnosed through fecal tests

Whipworms can be prevented with monthly parasite prevention.

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Tapeworms

- Come from consuming fleas or small rodents
- Often seen as rice-like segments in stool
- Fecal tests may not detect them reliably
- May not initially be harmful but can be uncomfortable

Flea prevention is essential to preventing tapeworms!

Heartworms

- Spread by mosquitoes
- Affect both dogs and cats (though less common in cats)
- Can cause heart and lung damage
- Difficult and dangerous to treat, especially in cats

Heartworm disease is preventable with monthly year-round medication.



Tapeworm segments in stool typically look like pieces of rice.



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What Can You Do to Protect Your Pet (and Your Family)?

- Use prescribed parasite prevention all year
- Clean up pet waste promptly
- Keep the environment (e.g., house, yard) free of parasites and do not allow standing water
- Prevent hunting behavior (e.g., catching rodents)
- Schedule regular fecal exams with your veterinarian
- Ask your veterinary team about the best products for your pet
- Wear gloves and wash hands thoroughly when an infection is suspected

Let's Work Together!

Your veterinary team is here to help guide you in protecting your pets and household. Our veterinary nurses are trained to discuss parasite risks, prevention options, and treatment plans. Don't hesitate to ask questions—we're happy to help!