

Intestinal Parasite Information

Roundworm (Toxocara)

Roundworms are the most common intestinal parasite of dogs and cats. Pets become infected by swallowing roundworm eggs or larvae (immature worms) found in contaminated soil/feces, eating infected rodents, birds and certain insects. The mother commonly infects puppies & kittens while they are still in the uterus, therefore many puppies and kittens are born with this parasite. PUBLIC HEALTH SIGNIFICANCE: Human infection with roundworm larvae is possible but does not occur frequently if good hygiene is practiced. Ingestion of contaminated stool or soil is necessary for infection. Children should be taught the importance of cleanliness when playing with animals, especially litters of puppies or kittens.

Hookworm (Ancylostomiasis)

Hookworms are a relatively common intestinal parasite of dogs, cats, and other animals. Animals become infected with hookworms by eating infective eggs or larvae, penetration of the skin or footpads by larvae or transmission of larvae from the mother while in the uterus. The time from consumption of infective larvae to the appearance of eggs in the stool is 15-26 days. Hookworms are one of the most serious intestinal parasites, as they feed on the blood of their host animal and can cause severe anemia. PUBLIC HEALTH SIGNIFICANCE: Hookworm larvae can penetrate human skin and cause a skin disorder known as cutaneous larval migrans or creeping eruption. This infection is not common, but anyone who develops a skin rash after being contact with a pet with hookworms should consult a physician.

Whipworm (Trichuriasis)

The whipworm is a small, thin worm that lives in the large intestine and cecum. Whipworms can cause diarrhea, bloody feces and poor general health. It takes about 3-4 months after infection until eggs are passed in an infected pet's stool.

Coccidia (Coccidiosis)

Coccidian are protozoan or one celled parasites of the small intestine of both dogs and cats. Coccidiosis is rarely a problem in mature animals. Coccidia appears to have little effect on adult pets, which may be carriers and spread the disease. Puppies and kittens are the most susceptible to coccidia. It starts with a slight diarrhea but gradually becomes more severe until the droppings become full of blood and mucus. The pet then becomes dehydrated and very sick.

Tapeworm

The tapeworm is a parasite found in the intestines of dogs and cats. It consists of a head and a long flat body made up of segments. Segments are passed in the animal's feces, leaving the head still attached to the intestinal lining, where it produces new segments. This infection is usually diagnosed by finding the segments in feces, bedding or clinging to the hair around the anus. When first passed, segments are yellowish to white about ¼ inch long and may expand and contract. When dry, the segments resemble cucumber seeds or grains of rice. Tapeworms are not passed directly from pet to pet, but require an intermediate host in which to develop. Common intermediate hosts are FLEAS and SMALL ANIMALS such as mice, rats, squirrels and rabbits. Reinfection is controlled by eliminating or reducing contact with intermediate hosts (flea control and/or treating premises/kennels/bedding).

Giardia

Giardia is an intestinal disease of people, dogs, cats and other animals. It is caused by a microorganism which is swallowed when the animal eats contaminated, food, stool, or water. Giardia principally infects the upper small intestine. Infected individuals pass the infective cysts in their stool and the cycle repeats again. Diagnosis may be difficult; therefore repeated microscopic examinations of multiple stool samples are often needed to find the cysts. The most common sign of infection is the persistent diarrhea with a pale, greasy, and occasionally blood-tinged stool. Giardia prevents the proper absorption of nutrients, damages the delicate intestinal lining and interferes with digestion. PUBLIC HEALTH SIGNIFICANCE: Giardia is a relatively common parasite in people. Good personal hygiene should be practiced in homes where Giardia has been diagnosed in a pet. Your pet's stool should be cleaned up and properly disposed of. Children should not be allowed to handle the stool.

Keep stools picked up in yard/ litter box to prevent reinfection or infection of another pet!

Please call if you have any questions or your pet's diarrhea/ condition worsens or does not improve, or you simply have a question about the medication.