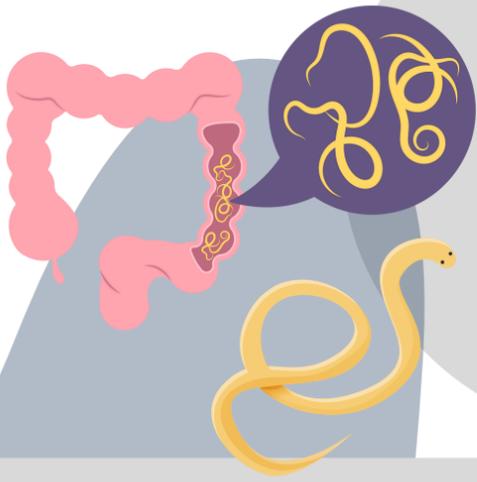


Intestinal Parasites

Intestinal parasites are a concern for our dogs & cats. Not only do they pose a health risk for the pet, but some of them are zoonotic which means they can be spread to people. Puppies/kittens, outdoor pets, pets hunting & those pets not on any prevention are at higher risk for contracting intestinal parasites. The primary mode of transmission is fecal-oral. An animal, or human, directly or indirectly ingests infected feces because they are eating an entire small mammal, swallowing contaminated matter, self-grooming, or not washing their hands before eating (in the case of humans). Some parasites can also be spread through the placenta or via milk, which is why puppies & kittens are often infected when they are born. Diagnosis of these parasites is most commonly done by evaluating the feces for eggs or cysts. Intestinal parasites are broadly broken down into worms, protozoa & flukes. The following provides more specific information on the most common intestinal parasites in our area (flukes are very rare in Pennsylvania & not included in this summary).

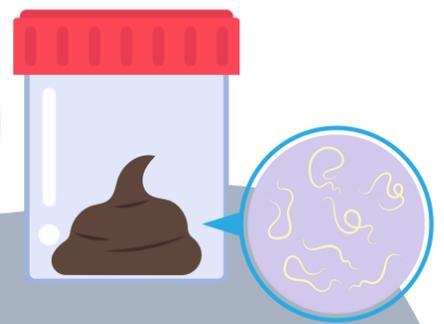
ROUNDWORMS



Roundworms are the most common intestinal parasite we see in our local dog & cat populations. In most cases they don't cause problems to the pet, but they can cause diarrhea, weight loss & inability to thrive. Puppies & kittens are at higher risk for health problems, especially if there is a high worm burden. These worms will resemble spaghetti & can be found in the feces (usually after dying) or when vomited. In most cases, you won't know your pet has parasites if fecal testing is not done. These worms readily respond to treatment & can be prevented by giving monthly heartworm prevention. This worm is ZONOTIC by indirect fecal ingestion & can cause adult worms to develop in eyes & other organs (visceral larval migrans). Regularly cleaning the feces from the environment is an important part in preventing spread & reinfection.

HOOKWORMS

Hookworms are a very small intestinal worm & generally are never seen in the feces. Their mouths have several tiny hooks, hence their name. They can cause similar health problems as roundworms, however, given the hooks they possess they are more likely to cause bleeding. This can cause profound anemia in newborns with a high worm burden. Treatment & prevention are the same as for roundworms. This worm is ZONOTIC usually by contracting them through the skin (cutaneous larval migrans). Classically, a contaminated cat may defecate in a sandbox or the beach, making it easy to contract. Regularly cleaning the feces from the environment is an important part in preventing spread & reinfection.



WHIPWORMS



Whipworms are a very small intestinal worm & generally are never seen in the feces. They cause similar health problems as roundworms; however, they are known to cause more profound diarrhea & health changes that resemble Addison's disease. Due to the unique life cycle of this parasite, a special treatment protocol is needed to completely resolve them. The best way to treat & prevent is to maintain your pet on a monthly parasiticide labeled to kill whipworms. This worm is NOT zoonotic. Whipworms are particularly resilient in the environment making it really hard to rid them from the yard. Regularly cleaning the feces from the environment is an important part in preventing spread & reinfection.

GIARDIA

Giardia is a protozoa, not a worm. It is microscopic & nothing you'd ever see in the feces. Diarrhea & weight loss are common signs with this parasite, but not all pets with this parasite will show signs. It can be a difficult parasite to get rid of & may take a few rounds of treatment to resolve. In very rare cases, it can be ZONOTIC to humans. Regularly cleaning the feces from the environment is an important part in preventing spread & reinfection.



COCCIDIA



There are several species of coccidia, but the most common type in dogs & cats are Cystoisospora. Pets coming from larger groups (shelters, kennels, farms, etc.) are at higher risk.

Diarrhea is the most common problem. This can be more problematic in young puppies & kittens. Coccidia is pretty responsive to treatment. Coccidia is NOT zoonotic. Regularly cleaning the feces from the environment is an important part in preventing spread & reinfection.

EIMERIA & STRONGYLOIDES

Eimeria & Strongyloides are parasites that do not cause problems in dogs & cats despite being commonly found in the feces. They are contracted by eating the feces of herbivores such as rabbits, cows & horses. These eggs are just passing through & do not require any treatment. These parasites are NOT zoonotic.



TAPEWORMS



There are many types of tapeworms, but the most common in our pets is Dipylidium caninum. These are almost exclusively contracted from ingesting infected fleas, occasionally from eating small rodents that are infected with fleas. Tapeworms generally don't cause significant disease and are more gross to humans than anything. They can cause perianal itching though.

Tapeworms are often diagnosed when the segments are seen on the feces or around the anus. These segments resemble rice and can be seen to be moving when fresh. The segments are actually just egg packets and the head and body of the worm is still attached in the intestines. This parasite is NOT directly zoonotic from your pet, however, if a human were to somehow ingest an infected flea they could get tapeworms themselves.