



By Dr. Maria Krenz, DVM – The Zimmerman Veterinary Clinic 763-856-4848

Internal Parasites-Protect your pets and family

What are worms?

Worms are intestinal parasites and most often they live and grow inside the intestines of pets. The most common worms are roundworms and hookworms. Other common parasites which pets can contract are tapeworms, giardia and coccidia.

How do pets contract worms?

Infected animals shed worm eggs in their feces and can quickly contaminate their surroundings. Some eggs can lay dormant in the environment for very long periods of time. Other pets can pick up worms by coming into contact with fecal material or by ingesting eggs from a contaminated environment. Puppies and kittens are most vulnerable to infection. Often, worms are passed from a mother to the puppies or kittens before or shortly after birth.

What signs do infected pets show?

Some pets may not show any signs of infection, but could still be shedding parasite eggs and contaminating the environment. Common clinical signs of infected animals include vomiting, loss of appetite, and weight loss. Occasionally heavy infections can be fatal. Some owners may see worms in their pet's feces or segments attached to the pet's hair.

Can people be infected?

People can acquire roundworms and hookworms from animals. This is called a zoonotic infection. Infection usually happens when humans come into contact with contaminated soil, sand, or plant life. Children are more vulnerable to infection perhaps because they often play on contaminated ground. Please talk to your physician, if you have any concerns about yourself or your family.

How do I prevent infection?

- Take your pet to see your veterinarian for an annual wellness examination at least once every year. A fecal analysis is recommended at minimum of once a year.
- Bring puppies and kittens to your veterinarian at an early age to start an appropriate deworming schedule.
- Keep your pets on an appropriate deworming schedule as recommended by your veterinarian.
- Keep home and play areas free of animal waste. Clean litter boxes daily; cover outdoor sandboxes when not in use and bag and dispose of dog feces daily.
- Thoroughly wash your hands and teach children to wash hands after contact with pets or after cleaning pet areas.
- If you think that your pet may currently be suffering from worms, please see your veterinarian as soon as possible, so they can prescribe a treatment plan.

Disclaimer: This written content is meant to be educational and is not medical advice. Always consult a veterinarian about medical advice for your pet.