



What You Should Know About Pets And Worms.....

Linda Schneider, VMD
Macedon Veterinary Care

Myths about worms and worming of pets cause a great deal of confusion for pet owners. Most puppies and kittens will harbor some variety of intestinal parasites, i.e. “worms”. Adult, female dogs and cats are capable of passing parasitic worm larva directly to fetuses before birth. Puppies and kittens are generally born with worms because dormant larva are reactivated by the hormones of pregnancy and migrate to the placenta and into the lungs of the developing fetuses or into the mammary glands of the mother where they are picked up by newborns when nursing. Within three to four weeks larva develop into adult worms in the intestine of the puppy or kitten. The most common parasites we find are hookworm, roundworm, whipworm, and coccidia. These parasites can cause severe diarrhea and illness in young puppies and kittens and can result in death if not treated. Intestinal parasites are a preventable disease. Puppies and kittens should be wormed at an early age under the direction of your veterinarian. The mother dog or cat should also be treated at the same time. Puppies and kittens frequently have to be wormed more than once. Your veterinarian may request a fecal sample to confirm parasites. The sample is treated in a way to separate the eggs, which can then be identified under the microscope.

Currently many broad-spectrum, safe wormers are available through your veterinarian. Be cautious when purchasing OTC (over-the-counter) wormers. It is necessary to read the fine print as most OTC wormers are not broad-spectrum, may only eliminate a single kind of worm, and are relatively ineffective.

YES! People can become infected with parasites common to dogs and cats. Children may be more likely to be infected because they are less careful about hygiene, are more likely to put their hands in their mouth, commonly play in dirt or sand, and may eat grass or dirt contaminated with parasite eggs. Worm eggs passed in stools of puppies and kittens can contaminate soil and other environments. When a person or child comes in contact with larva it is possible for larva to migrate into human tissue. Eye and brain tissue can be affected causing visual impairment, blindness, or even death in rare occasions. Prevention of human infections includes good hygiene, keeping children away

from contaminated soil and sand boxes, and worming kittens and puppies with veterinary prescribed wormers. Adult pets should have a fecal examination by your veterinarian at least once a year.

WORMING MYTHS

1.) Because I don't see worms in my pet's stool, my pet must be worm free.

WRONG! Many intestinal parasites are only identified microscopically.

2.) My dog might have worms because it is rubbing its butt on the carpet and/or in the yard.

WRONG! This behavior is probably a sign of anal gland irritation. Check with your veterinarian.

3.) My pet can not have worms because I worm once a month with an OTC product.

WRONG! OTC products are not designed to treat all types of intestinal parasites.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- Have regular fecal exams done on puppies and kittens and worming with veterinary supervision.
- Have annual fecal exams done on all adult pets.
- If unable to get a fecal sample (outdoor cats), worm prophylactically once a year with veterinary prescription.
- Use heartworm preventative monthly with added intestinal parasite protection such as Heartgard, Interceptor, or other preventatives recommended by your veterinarian.
- Have children wash hands after playing in potentially contaminated environment.

If you have any questions, please call Macedon Veterinary Care at 315-986-4246