

Worms

There are two types of parasitic worms found in dogs and cats: roundworms and tapeworms.

Roundworms

These are the most common intestinal parasites in dogs. They have round bodies with pointy ends and vary in size from 1cm to over 20 cm. There are a number of different species in the UK and a few species that may be found if a dog had travelled or lived overseas.

Your dog can pick up worms via a number of pathways:

Toxocara canis the main dog roundworm can be passed to unborn puppies from the bitch so they can be born infected or they can pick them up from their mothers milk. Dogs can eat the eggs or larval stages from other dog faeces or from the environment. Roundworm eggs are very hardy and survive on the ground for up to 2 years. It is also possible to get direct invasion of the skin by hookworms.

Toxocara canis, on very rare occasions, can infect humans and has been responsible for incidents of blindness in young children.

Tapeworms

These look different to roundworms and are either seen as single segments (like a grain of rice) or in chains of 2 or more segments (ribbon like). When fresh they can be seen moving on the fur of the animal or on the faeces. They can vary in size from 1 cm to several metres.

Tapeworms are usually transmitted to your pet via an intermediate host (this is another animal eaten by your pet which thereby infects him/her). Intermediate hosts vary depending on the species of worm but include: fleas, mice, rats, sheep and birds

Cleaning up your dog faeces properly can greatly reduce possible re-infection and transmission to other animals and people. The removal of adult worms from your dog is also vital. Routine regular worming of all pet dogs and cats is essential.

The products we recommend for this are listed below.

Worming products

We stock a range of safe and effective worming products for both dogs and cats. Unfortunately recent experience shows that many pet shop products are unreliable in the control of both round and tapeworms. We therefore recommend the following products:

Against both roundworms and tapeworms

- **Cazitel Plus**- a very safe and effective round and tape wormer available as a pork flavoured tablet
- **Milbemax** - a very safe and effective round and tape wormer available as a chewable tablet

Against roundworms

- **Panacur**- a very safe and effective, broad spectrum round wormer available in a powder, paste or liquid preparation, particularly useful for pregnant bitches or very young puppies.

Against tapeworm

- **Droncit** - a safe and effective tapeworm available as a tablet or injection

Frequency of treatment

Worming products do not have long lasting effect; they just clear/treat for worms that are present so worming products should be given on a regular basis to treat for any new infections picked up.

Adult dogs should be wormed every 3-4 months

Puppies over 2 weeks old but less than 6 months should be wormed every 4 weeks

Lungworm

Lungworm is a parasite called *Angiostrongylus vasorum* that is carried by slugs and snails and can infect dogs.

Infection happens when dogs eat these common garden pests either intentionally or when rummaging through undergrowth, eating grass, drinking from puddles or playing with

outdoor toys etc. Foxes can also be infected with lungworm and may possibly play a role in its spread.

Infected dogs can spread the larvae of the parasite in their faeces increasing the chance of other dogs becoming infected.

The adult of this particular worm lives in the major blood vessels of the heart and the infect the lungs. Symptoms of infection include: coughing and breathing problems, poor blood clotting, general sickness and lethargy and depression. **Left untreated it can be fatal**

Both prevention and treatment is straightforward. We prescribe a specific spot-on solution called **Advocate** which is applied to the back of the neck. If you think your puppy may be at risk from lungworm, ask at the surgery for more information.

Heartworm

This parasite called *Dirofilaria Immitis* does not occur in the UK but may be seen in dogs imported from warmer countries or in dogs that have lived or travelled abroad. The adult worm lives in the main arteries leading to the lung and occasionally within the heart itself and produces microscopic larvae that disperse into the dogs blood. Infection is transmitted by mosquito or from one dog to another.

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