

Worms and your pet

Worms in the environment

Roundworms are related to earthworms, but live out most of their lifecycle in the intestines of dogs and cats. Eggs produced by the adult worm pass out in your pet's faeces, and can survive in the environment for up to 5 years. Pet animals spend a lot of time sniffing around, and eating grass, and easily pick up eggs from other animals.

Some types of roundworm found in dogs and cats can also infect humans, and are responsible for a rare but serious condition called Visceral Larval Migrants. This affects children most commonly, due to their poor hand hygiene, and can cause loss of sight, spinal cord damage or other tissue damage.

Tapeworms can also infect dogs, cats and people. Your pets may pick up tapeworm cysts by eating raw meat- for example a hunting cat eating mice or birds, or a dog finding dead livestock or rabbits while out walking. (Even very decomposed ones) Some tapeworms can also be carried by fleas, who pass on the infectious cyst to your pet in their saliva when they bite. Once your pet has an intestinal tapeworm, infectious segments passed in the faeces can cause serious damage if contracted by a person.

Rural areas of Wales such as Monmouthshire have high levels of a Hydatid tapeworm called Echinococcus, carried by sheep. Government worming programmes to control this hydatid will reduce incidence of disease in humans but it can never be eradicated.



How can I treat worms?

Both round and tapeworms can be easily treated with effective prescription wormers available from Riverside. Most pet-shop or supermarket preparations do not contain the right active ingredient to treat hydatids, so safeguard your family by only using veterinary recommended products.

Why are puppies and kittens wormed more often?

Puppies and kittens have weaker immune systems, which are not as effective as adult animals at combating parasitic infestations. For this reason, they tend to suffer higher burdens of worms and can become very ill if not treated.

Both bitches and queens (female cats) pass roundworm eggs to their offspring across the placenta during pregnancy, and in their milk. Even puppies and kittens who have never been outside can have large numbers of roundworms in their intestines.

Typically, infected puppies and kittens may look poor or underdeveloped, with harsh coats and a pot-belly.

Our recommendations

Worm puppies and kittens from 6 weeks old with Milbemax. Give two doses, one month apart.

Continue to dose all animals once every 3-4 months for life-long protection.

Encourage good hand hygiene after handling pets.

Clean up faeces as soon as you can, disposing of them responsibly.



A note on Toxoplasmosis

Toxoplasma is a protozoal parasite carried by many cats without showing signs of illness. It can cause signs of mild diarrhoea in cats, and mild flu-like symptoms in people. However, toxoplasma can cause abortion in women if contracted during pregnancy. It is strongly recommended that women who are pregnant or trying to conceive should not handle cat faeces. Use gloves and an apron to clean cat's litter trays, and wash hands thoroughly afterwards.

Toxoplasma has also occasionally caused problems in people with suppressed immune systems, such as those on chemotherapy or HIV positive people.

Routine wormers do not kill Toxoplasma.