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Worm control in dogs and cats



SHERLEY'S

THE EXPERTS IN PET CARE

Worm control in dogs and cats

Of all the subjects which cause owners to worry about their pets' health, worms rank high on the list. Over the years a great deal of superstition and mythology has built up regarding the 'supposed' symptoms caused by worms, not to mention the weird and horrific folk remedies. There is really no need for this excessive alarm. Firstly, worms do not cause as many problems as people may think, and, secondly, with modern drugs they can be quite safely eliminated without causing any distress to the animal.

ROUNDWORMS AND TAPEWORMS

All dogs and cats at some time in their lives have worms. Usually this is during their puppy or kittenhood and at this time the owner should always be on guard and look for symptoms. However, whilst worms can cause slight illness, remember that a quite healthy pet can pass, or vomit, worms.

The worms found in dogs and cats in Britain fall into two main categories - roundworms and tapeworms. The majority live on the partly digested food in the intestines. Unless they are present in very large quantities, they are unlikely to produce symptoms of illness, except in the case of young puppies or kittens.



ROUNDWORMS IN DOGS

Species

There are several species of roundworms that affect dogs but the most important is a worm called *Toxocara canis*.

Appearance

Toxocara canis worms can be up to several inches in length and they have round bodies - rather similar to a tiny earthworm. They are of a whitish or pinkish brown colour due to ingested material.

Life cycle

These worms are spread directly from dog to dog. The eggs are microscopic in size and are passed in the faeces. They are ingested again by licking. Subsequently they hatch into larvae in the intestines of the dog - these then travel through the liver into the bloodstream and enter the lungs. They pass through the lungs, are coughed up, and swallowed to reach the intestines again where they mature into adults which produce eggs and repeat the cycle. The adult worms are usually noticed in the faeces. In the adult dog the larvae tend to remain as harmless 'cysts' in muscle of the dog and only a small number of adult dogs become fully infected. However, in the pregnant bitch, the larvae in the cysts can become active again, infecting the puppies through the bloodstream before birth.

Routine worm treatment only kills worms already inside the animal. In puppies regular, repeated dosing has to be carried out, as new eggs and larvae are ingested, to ensure that all new worms are removed. This will be dealt with in more detail later.

Hookworms (*Uncinaria*)

These are much less commonly seen in Britain, but they are blood sucking worms which can cause serious loss of condition.

Whipworms (*Trichuris*)

This is a rather rare type of worm infestation which can only be diagnosed by a veterinary surgeon who will look for microscopic eggs in the faeces.

ROUNDWORMS IN CATS

Toxocara cati

These are of similar appearance to the dog *Toxocara*.

Recognition

The adult worm may be passed in the faeces but because of the cat's clean habits, the worms are not easily detected in cats. They may be vomited and it is not uncommon for an adult cat to expel a single large worm when regurgitating hair.

Life cycle

Worm eggs ingested by the cat hatch out as larvae in the intestines and, in a similar fashion to that in the dog, pass through the gut wall and migrate around the body before returning to the intestines. Again some of the larvae fail to return to the intestines in the adult, and become dormant in the tissues.

Dormant worm larvae can also be found in other creatures, eg mice, that have eaten the eggs. If an infected

mouse is eaten by a cat, these larvae then develop into adult worms in the cat's intestine.

Young kittens can be infected either by ingesting eggs or by ingesting larvae that have passed through the mother's milk. Infection before birth, which occurs in the dog, does not happen in cats.

Toxascaris leonina

This is not common in the cat. The main route of infection is by ingestion of dormant larvae in the tissues of prey such as mice.

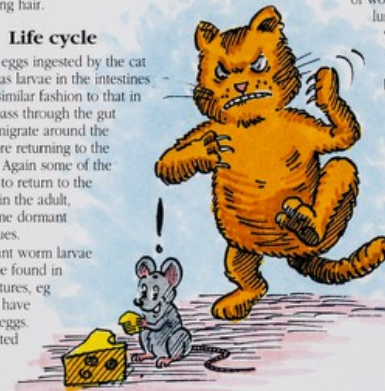
SYMPTOMS OF WORM INFECTIONS IN DOGS AND CATS

The symptoms can vary in their intensity. In young pups and kittens, worms may cause abdominal swelling and pain, loss of weight, vomiting or diarrhoea and on rare occasions, rupture of the bowel. A post mortem may find that the stomach and intestines contain hundreds of worms. The migrating larvae in the lungs may also cause coughing, which can be an important symptom. These larvae may also travel through the liver, brain or other tissues.

A young kitten or pup that is thin with a 'pot belly' is often described as a typical 'wormy' puppy or kitten.

In adult animals symptoms are rarely seen except for an occasional adult worm in faeces or vomit.

Nevertheless it is still very important to treat adults for round-worms as we will see later.





TREATMENT OF ROUNDWORMS IN DOGS AND CATS

Modern treatment for roundworms does not mean starving your pet, and causes no distress at all. The remedies are palatable and easy to administer, and generally are very effective. Sherley's makes a range of tablets, granules, cream and syrup suitable for all ages of dog or cat.

Treatment of the puppy and kitten

Frequent dosing of the puppy and kitten is required due to the large numbers of larvae entering the intestine for the first few weeks of life. A suggested regime is:

Age: 2-3 weeks - 12 weeks

Dose: Every 2 weeks

Age: 3-6 months

Dose: Every 4 weeks

Dosing the adult dog or cat

From six months of age the adult dog and cat should be dosed four times a year with a round-**and** tapeworm preparation.

DANGER TO CHILDREN

There has been a great deal of publicity in recent years regarding the risk of infection to children through contamination of parks and playgrounds by faeces from dogs infected with roundworms. Although the roundworm cannot complete its life cycle in humans, ingested eggs on **very rare occasions** can cause serious conditions in children. It is therefore of the greatest importance to see that puppies which are in contact with children are kept free from worms, and that a good standard of hygiene is maintained: the dog's excreta should be cleared away as soon as possible from gardens or exercise runs to prevent the ground becoming heavily contaminated with worm eggs, which can lay dormant in the topsoil for several years. Likewise, dogs should be discouraged from fouling public places where children play.

It is also absolutely vital to ensure that adult dogs and puppies are wormed regularly following the regimes described in this leaflet. This will help to minimise the amount of egg contamination of the environment.

It is mainly the dog roundworm that has been implicated in problems with children and evidence of the involvement of the cat roundworm is scant. Nevertheless, it makes sense to routinely worm cats for roundworm as well.

TAPEWORMS IN DOGS AND CATS (*Taenia* and *Dipylidium* species)

Tapeworms are commonly found in adult dogs and cats.

Recognition

The 'worm' actually consists of a number of whitish coloured segments which are joined together to form the tape, which can be up to 3 feet in length. This terminates at the narrow end in a head which is attached by minute hooks to the lining of the intestines.

The presence of the worm is usually recognised when the mature segments are shed via the rectum, or with the faeces, or occasionally when the cat or dog vomits a complete worm. The individual segments can be up to one half of an inch in length, oval in shape resembling a grain of rice, and may be moving when they are shed.

How they are spread

Tapeworms are never transmitted directly from dog to dog or cat to cat, but always through an intermediate host. These may include birds, mice, rabbits and lice. However, the most common tapeworm affecting both dogs and cats is *Dipylidium caninum*, the intermediate host of which is the flea. The dog or cat may swallow the flea containing the larvae of the tapeworm whilst grooming and thus become infected. The other main tapeworm affecting dogs and cats belongs to the *Taenia* family and the animal becomes infected by, for example, eating a bird, mouse or uncooked animal carcass that is infected.



The larva grows into a tapeworm and attaches itself to the intestine where it remains until it is mature and begins to shed segments containing the microscopic eggs. These are eaten by the intermediate host and the cycle is repeated.

Symptoms

The amount of food that is consumed by tapeworms is minute, and it is only when the worms are present in large quantities that they may interfere with normal digestion. Tapeworms therefore do not usually cause loss of weight. However, the presence of worms almost certainly causes some discomfort or irritation around the anus as a result of shedding segments.

Treatment

Tapeworms are easy to eliminate and suitable preparations are available in the Sherley's range. Preparations, for both round- and tapeworm are most convenient to use, and should be given 4 times a year.

Control of the intermediate host

The most common intermediate host is the flea. Therefore any flea problems must be eradicated otherwise the animal will rapidly become reinfected (often in a matter of a few weeks). Please read the Sherley's Flea Leaflet for further information.

It is important to remember that cats or dogs that are regular hunters may well become infected from eating mice and rabbits etc. The only answer in these cases is to dose regularly with tapeworm preparations.



Sherley's makes a range of worming preparations suitable for both dogs and cats.

Sherley's Palatable Worming Tablets

These yeast-based tablets for roundworm are readily accepted by both dogs and cats.

Sherley's Worming Granules for Cats

As every cat owner knows, giving tablets can sometimes be difficult. However, Sherley's Worming Granules are an easy, no-nonsense solution to routine worming. The Granules are tasteless and odour-free, and are simply sprinkled onto the cat's food. For cats over 6 months of age.

Sherley's One Dose Wormer for Dogs

The complete treatment for all types of worms in a single tablet. A simple and highly effective way to treat dogs of all ages, including pregnant and nursing bitches.

Sherley's Worming Syrup

This chocolate-flavoured syrup is a simple way to dose young kittens and puppies for roundworms. It may be given directly by mouth, or mixed with food.

Sherley's Worming Cream

This is another easy and effective way to control roundworms, in puppies and small dogs, cats and kittens. The simple syringe enables the cream to be given by mouth, or mixed with food.

Sherley's Multi Wormers

Sherley's has a range of tablet multi wormers for eliminating both round- and tapeworms. They are available for dogs of all sizes and there's also a preparation suitable for cats. For animals aged 6 months and older.

If you have a question regarding worms, or if you have a query relating to any aspect of pet care, please do not hesitate to call Sherley's direct. Our team of experts are here to help and advise you.

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