

WORMS

Worms – what you need to know

Don't be alarmed if your pet does become infected with worms - all pets are affected at some stage of their lives. Indeed, they may well be regularly re-infected unless a routine worming program is adopted; the good news is that this is relatively simple and inexpensive to do.

If the infection is treated early, worms are unlikely to cause any serious harm to your family or your pet, but an infestation will affect your pet's general health and so should be treated quickly. In rare cases, some types may be passed onto humans, and can cause blindness in children (toxocara also known as roundworm).



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What are worms?

There are two main types of worms that affect pets, roundworms and tapeworms:

Roundworms – white in colour and, as the name suggests, round; often looking like a spaghetti strand. You may notice these in your pet's faeces, or if the infestation is particularly bad, the animal may vomit them up.

Tapeworms - flat and ribbon like, you might see rice-like segments of them around your animal's bottom. Tapeworms have a direct life cycle link with fleas, therefore if your animal has a tapeworm infestation it will also need to be treated for fleas.

What are the symptoms?

Both roundworms and tapeworms live in the intestines and use your animal's food as a source of nutrition. As a heavy infestation can cause injury and disease to your pet's gut lining, you may notice some changes in their well-being. Obvious symptoms to look out for include: coughing, weight loss, loss of appetite, dehydration, diarrhoea or blood loss (anaemia), and the animal may also have a "pot bellied" appearance.



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How often do I need to worm?

If your animal actively hunts for rodents, small mammals or birds (which are an indirect source of infection), it is very important to maintain a regular worming regime:

Adult pets

We recommend worming every 3 months unless you have small children in the house when monthly treatment is recommended

Puppies and kittens

Wormers should be given every 2 weeks until 12 weeks old, then once a month until 6 months old, and then follow the adult worming schedule.

As wormers do not protect your animal from becoming re-infected, it is very important to maintain a regular worming routine.

What sort of wormer should I use?

There are many products on the market, the main differences being in the way that the medicine is administered, so choose one that works for you and your pet:

Tablets - Single dose, multipurpose wormers. We believe that these are the most effective way to worm

Granules - These are odourless and tasteless, and can be easily added to your pet's food

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Liquid suspension - Good for puppies and kittens, but larger quantities are required in adults. Spooning the liquid into the animal's mouth can get messy, and this method is often not well tolerated either by owner or pet!

Paste - Less messy than suspension, well tolerated by most animals and particularly good for puppies and kittens.

'Spot on' drops - Highly effective against tapeworms in cats, and very easy to apply; simply squeeze a drop onto the back of your pet's neck.

'Spot on' combination drops - Highly effective against roundworms and fleas and are useful if you have small children and need to worm monthly for roundworms. Still need to treat tapeworms every 3 months

Injection - Only effective against tapeworms and needs repeating every month



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Reducing the risk of re-infection

Apart from regular worming, there are several other things you can do to stop worms being passed from animal to animal, or from pet to owners:

Always clean up your pet's faeces, either bury them or place in a sealed plastic bag and dispose of them in a dustbin. If your cat uses a litter tray, remove faeces daily and disinfect the tray every 3 – 4 days

Check your pet for signs of fleas and adopt a regular flea treatment regime

Try to discourage your animal from hunting rodents e.g. keep cats inside at night or place a bell on their collar

Make sure that children wash their hands after playing in a garden or other open areas that may be used by animals as a toilet. Cover sandpits – a particular favourite of cats!



If you need more information or help:

We're always happy to answer any questions you may have, so please just ask. Our practice nurses can help you to worm any difficult patients. Our staff are always here for you if you have any questions or concerns about your pet(s), so please do not hesitate to drop into our surgery, give us a call on 01477 544554 or e-mail. enquiries@cheshirepet.co.uk, and we'll always do our best to help.

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