

TOP 10 MOST DANGEROUS PET PARASITES

ROUNDWORMS

WHAT IS IT?

These worms are 3-5 inches long and live in the intestines, depriving their host of nutrients. They swim within the intestine and can grow large enough to block the intestinal tract of their host.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Roundworm is transmitted to puppies or kittens from their mothers at birth or shortly after. They can also become infected by swallowing roundworm eggs.

TAPEWORMS

WHAT IS IT?

Tapeworms can be several feet long and infest an animal's intestinal lining. It can be particularly dangerous because it can grow large enough to obstruct the intestines if left untreated.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Tapeworm eggs are occasionally consumed by fleas before hatching into larvae that infects the fleas. When pets are infested with fleas and lick themselves, they can ingest an infected flea and become infested.

HOO KWORMS

WHAT IS IT?

Hookworms are a species of parasite that are common in temperate, humid areas. These thin worms are typically no more than half an inch in length, yet they can cause severe complications when present in the small intestines of your pet.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Hookworms can infect both cats and dogs through skin contact with an infected animal, ingestion of hookworm eggs found in another animal's stool, or from their parents while in utero or nursing.

WHIPWORMS

WHAT IS IT?

Whipworms are small parasites that most commonly inhabit the colon of dogs, though some whipworms do infest cats. Those that do infect cats, *Trichuris campanula* and *Trichuris serrata*, do so most often in Europe and North America.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Dogs and cats prone to corgophilia are especially at risk for whipworm infection. The worms inhabit the large intestine and their eggs are passed in their host's feces. Outside of the host animal is where the eggs mature to an infective stage, where they can infect pets after being ingested.

HEARTWORM

WHAT IS IT?

This parasitic worm inhabits the heart of its host, specifically in its arteries. Using the bloodstream to proliferate through the body, these pests eventually spread throughout the lung and can be fatal to cats and small dogs.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

This parasite is unique in that it must be passed through mosquitoes in its larval stage before it can fully mature in a host animal. After taking blood from an infected animal, microfilariae is extracted along with the blood of an infected animal. Once transmitted from the mosquito to a host animal, this microfilariae develops into a

LUNGWORMS

WHAT IS IT?

As their name suggests, lungworms inhabit the lungs of their hosts and can cause respiratory problems in both cats and dogs. These worms lay their larvae in airways, which produces an obstruction that is responsible for the symptoms of lungworms.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Lungworms are ingested by pets when drinking water or eating an infected animal. The most likely candidate for an intermediate host to be ingested by your pet is a snail or slug. Once the larva has matured in the lymph nodes, the adults begin to lay eggs in the pulmonary capillaries.

LIVER/BLOOD FLUKES (SCHISTOSOMIASIS)

WHAT IS IT?

Liver flukes are flatworms that feed on blood. These parasites actually spread throughout the bile ducts and gallbladder while depositing their eggs into the intestines of their host.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Liver flukes spread from animal to animal in much the same way as lungworms. These parasites travel from animal to animal, most commonly starting in a slug or snail before transferring to a lizard, frog, cat, or dog.

STOMACH WORMS (PHYSALOPTERA)

WHAT IS IT?

Infesting both cats and dogs, these worms inhabit the stomach of animals in a way that causes digestive stress. These worms are unique in that the number of worms present for most infections is minimal. Often, only a single worm will be present in an infected animal.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Animals can become infected with stomach worms by ingesting an infected intermediate host; unlike liver flukes and lungworms, however, these worms are often found in grubs, beetles, and other corphagous (feces-eating) insects.

THREADWORMS (STRONGYLOIDES)

WHAT IS IT?

Threadworms, or pinworms, are small worms that live in the intestine of their host. These worms are no longer than a quarter inch in length. Though rare, these worms can infest both cats and dogs.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Threadworm spreads through feces, requiring only that a potential host makes contact as opposed to actual ingestion. The parasites enter the system through the skin and proliferate throughout the body in an animal's blood stream. These worms spread throughout the system and can be found in the respiratory, circulatory, and digestive systems of hosts with severe infestations.

RINGWORMS

WHAT IS IT?

This fungus actually isn't a worm at all. Ringworm is an infection that can irritate pets and cause great discomfort to your pet. There are more than 30 types of ringworm that can infect cats and dogs and do not typically pose any serious health concerns.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Ringworms are transmitted from mothers to their offspring before birth or immediately afterwards. Animals can also become infected by swallowing roundworm eggs.

SYMPTOMS:

Diarrhea, Vomiting, weight loss, malnutrition, loss of appetite, dull, scruffy fur, respiratory distress, weakness, swollen abdomen.

TREATMENTS:

Sterilize pet environment with bleach or similar chemical cleaner and then use a dewormer on your pet to eliminate the parasites. Some good dewormers include: Panacur C, Sentry HC Worm X Plus, and Excel Roundworm De-Wormer.

SYMPTOMS:

Anal irritation, vomiting, loss of appetite, 1/4" white worms in stools, dried segments in pet bedding, Diarrhea (rare)

TREATMENTS:

Tapeworms can be treated with a single dose of an appropriate dewormer. Products like Tapeworm Tabs can be mixed in with food to remove worms, while topicals like Frontline Plus can also offer protection as a preventive.

SYMPTOMS:

Often, hookworms can be present in dogs without displaying any symptoms. When symptoms are present, they include bloody diarrhea, anemia, weight loss, and weakness. Cats, on the show similar symptoms, but may also suffer from skin irritation and a worn coat.

TREATMENTS:

Hookworms can be easily treated with a deworming medication that contains anthelmintic. This treatment kills all hookworms in their adult stage but none in their larval stage. Therefore, multiple administrations of the treatment are necessary to completely solve the problem.

SYMPTOMS:

Weight loss, bloody diarrhea, and fatigue

TREATMENTS:

Whipworm infestations require a multiple-step treatment to ensure elimination. Because whipworm eggs can survive in the environment and re-infect pets, using a preventive or committing to regular deworming is recommended.

SYMPTOMS:

Persistent cough, lethargy, fatigue, reduced appetite, and weight loss in cats and dogs. It can also cause Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease and vomiting in cats.

TREATMENTS:

Heartworm infestations in dogs are treatable in almost all cases; however, no medications are currently available to treat cats with heartworm. Cats can be treated with supportive therapy to prevent deadly reactions- but are otherwise reliant on preventive measures to keep them safe from heartworm.

SYMPTOMS:

Coughing and shortness of breath are common symptoms in dogs and cats. Emphysema, pneumonia and other disorders can also be caused by a lungworm infection.

TREATMENTS:

Ivermectin is an essential ingredient in any dewormer that aims to treat a lungworm infestation. Proper testing is essential to identifying and treating the parasite. Tests might also be given after initial treatments to ensure the infestation is completely eradicated.

SYMPTOMS:

Many pets do not experience symptoms, as they tend to scale with the severity of the infestation. Otherwise, pets might experience vomiting, diarrhea, weight loss, loss of appetite, fever, and jaundice.

TREATMENTS:

Vitamin D administered through an IV can greatly help ill animals recover from liver fluke infection. Antibiotics, anti-inflammatories and other medication can also be used to kill the parasites.

SYMPTOMS:

Stomach worms can cause a host animal to vomit and, in the case of an extreme infestation, the vomit will contain one or more stomach worms.

TREATMENTS:

There are a variety of prescription drugs available that work to kill adult stomach worms. In addition to insecticides that work to kill the worms, other medications aim to treat the symptoms and ill effects of infestation.

SYMPTOMS:

Threadworms cause diarrhea in infected cats and dogs. Dogs with threadworm might experience appetite and weight loss, dehydration, and fatigue; cats might experience respiratory problems.

TREATMENTS:

Threadworm is extremely rare in pets and is generally treated with a specific prescription medication. The appropriate medication can be found through your veterinarian.

SYMPTOMS:

Ringworms causes diarrhea, vomiting, malnutrition, low of appetite and weight, fatigue, respiratory distress and pot belly in infected cats and dogs.

TREATMENTS:

Ringworms can survive in the environment and require treatment of both your pet and the environment. Antifungal shampoo or topical treatment should work to kill adult ringworms- but bleach or another chemical cleaner should be used to clean your home.