

## Intestinal Parasites

Intestinal parasites (often called worms) are very common in pets. They can infect pets of all ages but puppies and kittens are the most susceptible. Many pets will be asymptomatic carriers, but some can become sick. Certain types of parasites can be passed to humans as well. You can prevent spread by practicing routine hygiene, annual fecal screenings and year-round preventatives.

### **Signs of Intestinal Parasites**

- Diarrhea
- Weight Loss
- “Pot-bellied” Appearance
- Poor coat
- Abdominal Pain
- Vomiting

### **Types of Intestinal Parasites**

Roundworms – Most common intestinal parasite, in fact 90% of puppies under the age of 3 months are infected. They grow quickly up to 6 inches long and resemble string or spaghetti in your pet’s feces. They irritate the lining of the intestines and steal nutrients from the host. They can be transmitted to humans.

Hookworms – Attach and feed on blood in the small intestine causing anemia and GI upset. Hookworms can be fatal in puppies if left untreated. Pets can get hookworms from ingesting larvae in the environment or through their mother’s milk. Pets pass hundreds of eggs in their stool which can then live in the soil. Pets can also get them from ingested infected soil or feces. Hookworms can also be passed to humans.

Tapeworms – Pets get tapeworms by eating an infected flea or dead wildlife. They resemble grains of rice in the stool or around their anus. Most common sign your pet has tapeworms is by scooting their bottom on the ground.

Whipworms – Pets can pick up whipworms from ingesting infected substances such as feces, soil, and water. They can cause bloody stools if left untreated. They are hard to identify with the naked eye so a fecal screening would be needed to identify.

### **Treatment**

The best treatment is prevention. Speak with your pet’s veterinarian to discuss year-round intestinal parasite and flea control. If your pet is found to have intestinal parasites, a dewormer that is used for that specific parasite will be given to your pet. Dewormers are highly effective and safe.