

WORMING



There are a variety of different worms that can affect pets. The main worms that affect dogs and cats are roundworms and tapeworms which live in the intestines. Lungworm is becoming increasingly common and occasionally infection with other types of worm such as hookworms and whipworms is possible.

Roundworms

Adult roundworms may sometimes be seen in the faeces or may be coughed or vomited up in heavy infestations. They are white to brown in colour and “spaghetti like” in appearance, growing up to 15cm in length. Infection is acquired when roundworm eggs are eaten by your pet which develop into adult worms in their intestines. Adult worms lay thousands of eggs which are passed in the faeces into the environment and the whole cycle begins again. Roundworm eggs are extremely common in the environment and are extremely tough being able to survive for years outside of your pet. Young puppies and kittens are particularly susceptible to roundworms and often acquire these directly from their mothers. They rarely cause signs of illness but may cause poor and stunted growth and occasionally form complete blockage of the intestines. Roundworms can occasionally affect people, especially children, and in extreme cases can cause blindness.

Tapeworms

These are ribbon like in appearance and made up of many different segments, growing up to 60 cm in length. Tapeworm infections are usually seen when the segments are passed in the faeces and they may be seen crawling around the bottom of your pet. Segments may stick to the fur and dry out appearing like flattened grains of rice. Tapeworms must first develop as a cyst in an intermediate host such as a mouse, bird, sheep or ingestion of fleas during grooming. The host is then eaten by your pet and the cyst develops in the intestine into the tapeworm. Tapeworms in dog faeces can infect livestock, such as sheep, causing cysts to form in the brain and muscles.

Lungworm

Lungworm prevalence is increasing across the country and is picked up by pets eating infected slugs, snails or the trails they leave behind. You will not see the worms directly as they develop in the heart and major blood vessels but you may see signs of infection such as coughing, breathlessness, bleeding problems and in severe cases may be fatal.

Treatment and Prevention

There are a number of different products and formulations to treat worms. For most adult dogs and cats worming every three months is sufficient for most worms, although monthly is advised for total lungworm protection. Puppies and kittens require more frequent worming at monthly intervals until they are 6 months old. Picking up faeces promptly will reduce contamination of the environment and reduce the risk of infection.

Summary

Regular worming is recommended for all dogs and cats we will advise you on the most suitable treatment regime for your pet specific to their age and lifestyle.

