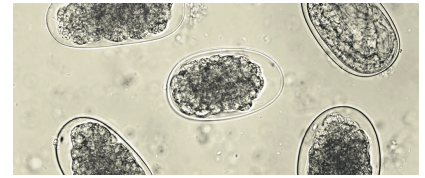




Hookworms in Cats & Dogs



Hookworms are intestinal parasites of the cat and dog. Their name is derived from the hook-like mouthparts they use to anchor themselves to the lining of the intestinal wall. Despite their small size, they ingest large amounts of blood from the tiny blood vessels in the intestinal wall. A significant number of hookworms can cause inflammation in the animal's intestine, as well as a life-threatening decrease of red blood cells (anemia). Anemia is most common in puppies but can occur in adult dogs.

Signs of hookworm infections are: black/tarry stool, poor hair coat, weight loss, anemia, pale gums, weakness, and bloody diarrhea. Animals affected may have 1 or multiple symptoms.

Hookworm eggs are shed through the host's feces and contaminate the environment. Larvae hatch from the eggs and can remain in the environment for weeks to months.

Cats and dogs can become infected through multiple routes:

1. Oral ingestion
2. Through the skin - in cases of severe infestation, hookworms in the environment are able to burrow through the skin of a host.
3. Before birth, through the womb of an infected mother.
4. After birth, through the milk of an infected mother.

Diagnosing a hookworm infection is done through routine fecal parasite testing. A small sample is analyzed under a microscope and the eggs are easily identified, if present. Puppies and kittens are the most commonly affected, but it is recommended to have a fecal test done at least once per year, no matter the age of the pet.

If a pet is found to have hookworms, a deworming medication, most commonly pyrantel, is prescribed. Deworming medications only kill adult worms, so it is important to give another dose of medication 2-3 weeks after the initial treatment to kill any new adults that may have grown from larvae during the first treatment. It is recommended to repeat a fecal test about a month after the second treatment to ensure the infection was cleared. Be sure to clean all contaminated surfaces, dispose of all feces promptly, and practice strict hygiene protocols when interacting with your pets, especially children.

Hookworms do not infect humans internally. However, the tiny larvae can burrow into human skin, causing a disease called cutaneous larval migrans. Also known as 'ground itch', this skin infection does not lead to the maturation of the larvae. Because contact of human skin with moist, larvae-infected soil is required, infection rarely occurs when good hygiene is practiced.

It is recommended that dogs then stay on once a month preventatives, such as Heartgard, Interceptor Plus, Simparica Trio, etc. because these products have ingredients that protect your pet against heartworms, and common intestinal parasites. For cats that go outdoors, or that may be at risk for contracting hookworms, it is recommended that they receive topical preventatives such as Revolution Plus, Bravecto Plus, NexGard Combo, etc.