



Roundworms in Cats & Dogs



Roundworms are the most common intestinal parasite found in dogs and cats. They are large-bodied round worms, averaging 3-6 inches in length. They swim freely within the intestines, unlike other parasites that attach to the intestinal walls. Roundworms are not particularly harmful to adult dogs and cats, but large numbers of worms in young or debilitated pets can cause issues.

The most common signs of roundworms are:

- Worms in your pet's stool or vomit
- Pot-bellied appearance in puppies and kittens
- Abdominal pain
- Poor growth in puppies and kittens
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Dull coat
- Anemia in severe cases

There are a few ways in which an animal can become infected with roundworms.

1. Before birth, through the mother's womb if the mother has roundworms - or has had them in the past.
 - a. Shortly after birth, through nursing.
2. Ingesting an infected prey animal (rabbits, mice, squirrels).
3. Sniffing/licking/ingesting infected feces.
4. Ingesting contaminated plants and soil in the environment.

Although this parasite is visible to the naked eye, it is important to do a fecal test to confirm a diagnosis, and to evaluate the amount of worms in the GI tract, or the "worm burden." During a routine fecal test, a small sample is analyzed under a microscope and the roundworm eggs that are shed in the stool 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 roundworms, a deworming medication is prescribed. The most common deworming medications for roundworms are pyrantel, or fenbendazole. Treatment usually consists of at least 2 doses of medication, typically given 2-3 weeks apart. Deworming will be part of your new puppy or kittens' preventative care when they come in for their series of vaccinations.

Roundworms are zoonotic, meaning that they can be passed between different animal species. This means dogs and cats can pass the parasites between each other, and we can even be at risk of developing a parasitic infection from our pets, with children being the most at risk. The only way that we can contract roundworms from our pets is if we ingest eggs that are passed through the stool. Eggs can be present on surfaces in the home including furniture, bedding, and flooring. It is important to clean all surfaces, especially any and all pet bedding, and maintain good hygiene after interacting with your pets. Another common spot for roundworm eggs are sandboxes. Make sure all outdoor sandboxes have a lid to avoid animals defecating in the area.

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 roundworms, it is recommended that they receive topical preventatives such as Revolution Plus, Bravecto Plus, NexGard Combo, etc.