



WORM INFESTATION IN CATS.

What Causes It?

Roundworms, tapeworms, and hookworms most commonly infect cats.

Roundworms invade a cat's intestines, and can migrate to it's bloodstream and organs. A large buildup of roundworms can be fatal for kittens.

Tapeworms are a parasite that are found in the small intestine of cats. The larvae hatch in the cat's stomach and attach to its small intestines. They are flat and segmented, white in colour and can grow up to 20cm long.

Hookworms are parasites that can invade and live in the small intestines of animals. Even after active worms leave the site of the bite, the site may continue to seep blood at the site. Internal infestation can also result in intestinal blood loss. Hookworm infestation can be fatal, especially in kittens.

How is it Transmitted?

Roundworm is one of the most widespread forms, contracted from eating infected insects, rodents or birds or by contact with contaminated soil.

Roundworms invade a cat's intestines, and can migrate to it's bloodstream and organs.

Cats get long and ribbon-shaped tapeworm, from ingesting a flea that has consumed tapeworm eggs. The larvae hatch in the cat's stomach, attaching to it's small intestines. Cats can also acquire tapeworms by eating infected rodents or lizards.

Hookworm infestations are always caused by ingestion, or by penetration of the skin by larvae and are generally found in contaminated water or contaminated environments. The hookworm is shed through the faeces, and passed into soil or sand. It migrates into the body of an animal, through the feet by walking on the infected soil, sand, or litter. Kittens will usually acquire this condition through their mother's milk.

Which Cats Are At Risk?

Cats that spend a lot of time outdoors are more susceptible, although, even indoor cats can get worms

Signs and Symptoms.

The most common signs and symptoms of worms include:-

- weight loss
- pot bellied appearance - especially in kittens
- poor coat appearance
- vomiting or vomiting up a worm.
- loss of appetite
- diarrhoea (sometimes bloody diarrhoea)
- anaemia - The cat or kitten has pale gums
- evidence of segments of worms around the anal area or in the faeces - spaghetti-shaped strings in the case of roundworm and rice-shaped grains in the case of tapeworm
- Continual licking of the anal area
- Stunted growth of a kitten

Early symptoms of Hookworm include :-

- lesions on the bottoms of the feet and in between the toes, where the hookworm has entered the skin.
- Coughing, if hookworm larvae gets into the lungs through ingestion
- dark and tarry stools
- diarrhoea,
- constipation.
- an unhealthy appearance
- poor appetite
- the linings of its nostrils, lips, and ears will be pale.

Complications can come about suddenly, and may result in death if your cat is not immediately treated.

Worms are easily cured with a few doses of medication, but if left untreated, they can cause serious health problems.

Treatment

Oral de-wormer medication is the treatment for roundworm and tapeworm

Drontal is a broad-spectrum de-wormer used in cats and kittens to treat tapeworms, hookworms, and roundworms. It kills mature and immature development stages of tapeworms in the intestine after a single treatment. A single tablet can usually be purchased over the counter from your vet without paying for a consultation. It can also be bought from online pet supply stores with a prescription.

Liquid suspension form (recommended for kittens)

Some spot-on monthly parasite control treatments will contain anti-worming properties.

As well as buying veterinary recommended products, such as Drontal and Panacur, other brands are available in supermarkets and on-line. It is advisable to check that these are as efficient.

When a wormer is given, although it removes worms already present in the digestive tract, it doesn't have a residual effect, but leaves your cat's system after a few days, so it won't prevent re-infection. This is why it's important to have a year-round programme in place.

Frequency of worming depends on the product you use, the age of your cat and their lifestyle..

Before giving a wormer, make sure you are giving the right dosage for your cat's weight; and as this can fluctuate with both age and activity, check it first.

Prevention.

Even indoor cats can get worms

The most common areas that tapeworm eggs are found are in the cat's bedding and in your carpet.

Cats can also acquire tapeworms by eating infected rodents or lizards.

You should regularly de-worm your cat or kitten with a product such as Drontal.

Flea control is also important.

Cleanliness and keeping the cat indoors will help fight worms.

Prevention is covered fully in the **"PREVENTION OF DISEASES IN CATS"** section above