

Parasite Control

Cats and dogs are susceptible to a wide range of parasites, both externally (on the outside) and internally (on the inside). Prevention of parasites can be as simple as drops applied to the skin or flavored treats given once a month. Some parasites may cause no signs of illness in your pet, and others may be life-threatening. A few even carry potentially harmful risks to their owners or children. People that are pregnant or immune-compromised (HIV-positive or undergoing cancer treatment) should be especially cautious. Below is a list of the more common parasites for which we treat or offer routine prevention.

External Parasites

Fleas

Tiny parasites that suck blood from furry animals and cause intense itching by their bite. Their damage may go further than just endless scratching; they may carry bacteria which invade the blood or intestinal parasites which are released when a flea is swallowed. An allergic reaction to the bite of fleas (Flea Allergy Dermatitis or FAD) is one of the most common problems seen by veterinarians. Fleas were even partly responsible for the plague. Prevention and treatment comes in the form of monthly drops or pills.

Ticks

Seen mostly mid-April through mid-June, these creepy insects attach themselves to cats, dogs, or people for long-term blood-sucking. They serve mostly as a carrier for bacterial organisms that they transmit through their saliva. They may also be able to suck enough blood to cause anemia. Prevention for ticks is the monthly application of drops to the shoulder area.

Ear mites

These parasites usually affect young kittens or puppies, but occasionally may be seen in older pets. Almost invisible to the naked eye, hundreds to thousands can live in an ear and cause an extremely intense irritation. Some pets have been known to dig at their ears with their back feet until they cause bleeding. Cleaning the debris from the ears and applying topical drops to the ear canals or monthly drops to the shoulder area are the basis of treatment.

Internal Parasites

Heartworm

Carried by mosquitos, these worms can be fatal to cats and dogs. Every pet is at risk from being bitten by a mosquito; therefore, every pet should be on some sort of prevention. This can be given by monthly drops or pills.

Intestinal parasites

Intestinal parasites include roundworms, hookworms, whipworms, and

tapeworms. If seen when they are passed in our pet's stool, some of these worms may be referred to as "spaghetti-like" or "rice-like". A couple of these may be passed to puppies or kittens through their mother's milk. However, most are transmitted from infected stools by the natural chewing and licking habits of young animals. Signs may be as vague as lack of energy, swollen bellies, diarrhea, or scooting on the pet's rear. Other signs may be severe, such as bloody diarrhea or poor-conditioning.

Zoonotic diseases

Zoonotic diseases are those which may be passed from pets to people, or vice versa. Roundworms and hookworms are among such diseases, and may carry significant health risks in people. Because children love pets, like to play in dirty areas, and often put things in their mouths, they are at increased risk of obtaining a zoonotic disease.

Strategic deworming

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended a program for reducing the number of internal parasites to which people and pets are exposed. Because of the extremely short amount of time it takes for some worms to go from egg to adult, this deworming program begins at 2-3 weeks of age. It is continued every two weeks until three months of age, and then is carried out monthly. Since most heartworm preventatives are given monthly and include medicine to remove intestinal worms, this becomes very easy to perform.