

KEEPING **PETS** AND **PEOPLE** HEALTHY



Discover which common pet parasites are a risk to humans too, and how you can protect your pet and your family.

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WHAT IS A ZOOONOSIS ANYWAY?

Some parasites affecting dogs and cats can be transferred to humans - these are called 'zoonoses'. They can be a significant health concern, especially for young children, the elderly, or anyone with a weakened immune system.

EXTERNAL PARASITES

Pets are at risk from fleas, ticks and mites. Their adventurous nature on neighbourhood outings and visits to parks, beaches and forests exposes them to parasites.

Some external parasites of cats and dogs can cause disease in people or transmit other organisms which cause disease.

FLEAS

Fleas are a common parasite of cats and dogs. Fleas are not only a problem for our pets, they can also transmit bacterial infections and parasites to people:

- **Flea-borne spotted fever** – caused by a bacterial infection most commonly transmitted when a person is bitten by an infected flea.



- **Cat-scratch disease** – caused by a bacterial infection transmitted in flea poo. People typically become infected through breaks in the skin (e.g. after being scratched or bitten by a cat).
- **Flea tapeworm** – a parasite transmitted by fleas that has the potential to infect people.

MITES



Sarcoptic mange (also known as scabies) is a highly contagious condition of dogs caused by microscopic *Sarcoptes* mites. The dog variety of the mite can also infest humans and cause a temporary dermatitis with intensely itchy skin lesions that can last for several weeks.



Skin lesions due to the transmission of *Sarcoptes* mites from a dog to its owner.

EXTERNAL PARASITE CONTROL RECOMMENDATIONS

Cats and dogs should be administered effective flea control products ALL year round and all pets in the household should be treated. To reduce the risk of human exposure to *Sarcoptes*, dogs should receive a product that treats and controls mites.

INTERNAL PARASITES

Worms can be a problem for cats and dogs of all ages. There may be no obvious signs that your pet has intestinal worms. Some worm species are zoonotic and a risk to people, children in particular.

ROUNDWORMS, HOOKWORMS AND WHIPWORMS

Kittens and puppies are particularly susceptible and can catch some worms from their mothers when they are very young.

- Infections may cause stunted growth, weight loss, anaemia, and runny poo.
- Worm eggs can be highly resilient and survive in the environment for years presenting an on-going source of infection for cats and dogs, and in some cases pose a health risk to humans.



SPEAK TO YOUR VET ABOUT AN OPTIMAL
PARASITE CONTROL PROGRAMME FOR YOUR PET

Examples of common cat and dog intestinal worms that can affect people:

ROUNDWORM

Roundworm eggs can be found in soil wherever dogs and cats have passed poo. Studies from all over the world have demonstrated high rates (13-35%) of soil contamination with canine roundworm eggs in public places such as sandpits, parks, playgrounds and beaches.¹ If roundworm eggs are accidentally ingested by a human, the parasite can migrate to internal organs, affecting muscles, eyes and the brain. Young children are considered most at risk as they are more likely to play in contaminated areas and place things in their mouths.

DID YOU KNOW? A SINGLE CANINE ROUNDWORM CAN LAY 200,000 EGGS PER DAY

HOOKWORM

Hookworm eggs are passed in the poo of infested cats and dogs. The eggs hatch and the larvae can infest people by penetrating the skin (e.g. if walking barefoot on contaminated sand or soil). The larvae can then migrate through the skin resulting in itchy and inflamed skin lesions.



Cutaneous larva migrans caused by migration of canine hookworm larvae through human skin.

INTESTINAL WORMS

WHY IS ITS IMPORTANT TO DEWORM YOUR PETS MONTHLY?

A monthly treatment interval is recommended for protecting against roundworm which is a significant risk to human health. It takes a roundworm just five weeks to mature and start laying eggs, so monthly deworming stops this happening.

This is important for reducing contamination of the environment with eggs and minimising zoonotic risk.



DEWORM MONTHLY

Monthly deworming kills roundworms before they can mature and lay eggs. Deworming every 3 months potentially gives a roundworm up to 42 days to shed eggs at a rate of 200,000 per day!



THE MOST COMPLETE PARASITE PROTECTION
ALL IN ONE EASY MONTHLY DOSE

RECOMMENDED DEWORMING PROTOCOLS



FIND OUT MORE

There are independent, international bodies that assess both animal and human risk - here's what they recommend:

The Australian Companion Animal Zoonoses Advisory Panel (ACAZAP)

Recommends monthly deworming of dogs and cats to reduce environmental contamination and minimise the zoonotic risk of roundworm and hookworm.

European Scientific Counsel for Companion Animal Parasites (ESCCAP)

Monthly treatment for cats free to roam outdoors and cats and dogs that share their home with young children or anyone with a weakened immune system
Monthly deworming for dogs in contact with parks, playgrounds or other dogs and pets that hunt or eat raw meat.

Companion Animal Parasite Council (CAPC)

Dogs and cats should be on **monthly intestinal parasite control** for roundworm. Optimal control – monthly. Less than optimal – 4 x year plus faecal exams at least 4 x yearly.

The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) - 2019 Feline Zoonoses Guidelines

Support year-round antiparasitic treatment to lessen the risk of human exposure to roundworm and hookworm.

Tropical Council for Companion Animal Parasites (TroCCAP)

Cats and dogs should be **dewormed monthly**.

ESSENTIAL HYGIENE

Good hygiene practices are essential to reduce the risk of zoonotic disease transmission from pets to people, especially for higher risk groups: children, the elderly, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems.

HAND WASHING

Hand washing is one of the best ways to stay healthy around pets and can also protect you against other diseases. Hand washing should be performed:

- After handling pets
- Prior to eating and drinking
- After outdoor activities, including gardening and play
- After cleaning raw vegetables
- After handling raw pet food
- After cleaning up pet poo

DISPOSE OF PET POO PROMPTLY

Immediate collection and disposal of pet poo will reduce contamination of the places pets go with zoonotic organisms and parasite eggs.

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN

Children should be supervised to minimise risk of oral exposure to contaminated material (e.g. soil and sand). Childrens' sand pits should be covered when not in use, so animals can't use them as toilets.

HUNTING

Wild prey such as rats, mice, or birds can be a source of zoonotic parasites or bacterial infections (e.g. Salmonella). Dispose of any 'gifts' your pets bring you in a safe way and wash your hands immediately after.

CAUTION WITH RAW MEAT DIETS

Raw meat diets can be contaminated with zoonotic organisms such as Salmonella and Campylobacter – a recent study detected Campylobacter in 90% of Australian chicken meat.² People may become infected from contact with the raw diet or the poo of animals which have consumed the diet.

To reduce the risk of disease transmission, avoid feeding raw meat diets to cats and dogs. If raw diets are fed, you should be extra diligent in performing hygiene practices (e.g. handwashing, cleaning and disinfection of bowls and contact surfaces).

Raw diets can pose a risk of infection to your pet and your family. Talk to your vet about the best type of diet for your pets.



DID YOU KNOW?
MONTHLY DEWORMING REDUCES THE RISK
OF WORMS BEING TRANSMITTED TO PEOPLE

REDUCE THE RISK



Dispose of pets poo promptly



Keep pets out of playgrounds and cover sandpits



Follow good hygiene practices, by washing hands after handling pets and before eating



Prevent children from ingesting soil and other materials that may be contaminated with pet poo



Deworm your pets monthly

ONE AND DONE PROTECTION

THE MOST COMPLETE PARASITE PROTECTION ALL IN ONE EASY, MONTHLY DOSE



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FIND OUT MORE

References: 1. Fakhri, Y., *et al* (2018) Toxocara eggs in public places worldwide – A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Environ Pollut*, 242(Pt B), 1467-1475. 2. Walker, L.J., *et al* (2019) Prevalence of *Campylobacter coli* and *Campylobacter jejuni* in retail chicken, beef, lamb, and pork products in three Australian states. *J Food Prot*, 82(12), 2126-2134.