

Parasite Control: Dogs

The main focus of our parasite control recommendations is the prevention of fleas and the elimination of tapeworms and roundworms. Depending on the lifestyle of your dog, the prevention of ticks and lungworm are also important considerations in our area. Less commonly, treatment for mites and lice may be required.

Fleas

Fleas are small, wingless insects which feed on blood and pass from one animal to another – including cats and humans! They cause itchiness, which may be severe, particularly in the case of flea allergic dermatitis.

After a blood feed an adult will lay up to 50 eggs a day. These eggs fall into the environment and develop – therefore in the event of an infestation it will be necessary to treat your house as well as your pet.

A wide range of flea products exist; the ideal choice for you will depend on your preferences as to:

- Formulation (e.g. tablet, spot-on, collar)
- Frequency of application
- Other parasites you are wanting to treat e.g. ticks, mites or roundworms (not tapeworm)



Roundworms

Roundworms live in the intestine and can cause symptoms including pot belly, poor coat and diarrhoea. Eggs are passed in the faeces and are microscopic, so you won't notice them in your dog's faeces.

They are widespread in the environment (though good poop-scooping does help to reduce this) and pets become infected by inadvertently swallowing eggs. In addition, puppies are usually born infected or are infected via their mother's milk.



Humans can be infected as eggs may be present on your dog's hair. In extreme cases this can result in blindness, with children most at risk.

- Young puppies should be wormed at 3, 5 & 8 weeks.
- Thereafter we recommend worming monthly until 6 months old, then every 3 months.
- Roundworm can be treated by tablet wormers or by some flea spot-on products.
- Wormers only treat the worms present in your dog at the time, so in certain situations (for example dogs who scavenge) it can be worth worming on a monthly basis.

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Tapeworm

Tapeworms are flat, ribbon-like worms which can break into segments, which may be seen intermittently in your dogs' faeces. Dogs become infected by eating infected tissue or via fleas. They may cause irritation (chewing) and scooting. If eaten by sheep, the tiny eggs develop into cysts which can make them unwell and can result in huge losses to the UK's sheep industry.

- Tapeworms can only be treated by TABLET wormers
- Worm 3-monthly, or monthly in higher risk situations (especially dogs living on farms)

Ticks

Ticks are spider-like blood sucking parasites. They are most common in woodland and moorland so if you often walk your dog in areas such as these, tick control is important. Ticks remain attached for several days, enlarging as they feed on blood before dropping off. As well as causing irritation they can transmit other diseases, including Lyme disease.

- Ticks can be removed with special tick removers
- However prevention is better and spot-ons, tablets and collars can protect your dog from getting a tick in the first place



Lungworm

Dogs can become infected with lungworm if they eat slugs or snails infected with the larvae. Affected slugs/snails can be tiny so this can occur accidentally, by drinking from puddles or going through undergrowth.



The signs of lungworm can be vague. Breathing difficulties or bleeding may arise and the condition can be life-threatening.

- Lungworm can be prevented with monthly treatments
- Certain spot-on flea products and tablet wormers have activity against lungworm

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Our nurses are happy to advise if you would like further information on any aspect of parasite control for your dog.