



IMPORTANCE OF MANAGING PARASITES IN THE OUTDOOR DOG

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Dogs are more than just pets. They are members of the family. And like any four-legged member of the family, it's important to keep them healthy and free of intestinal parasites. While parasites are a threat to all dogs, outdoor dogs are especially vulnerable due to environmental exposure.

How dogs get parasites

Parasites are all around us and it's common for a dog to become infected with intestinal parasites at some point in their life. The more your dog is outside, the greater his risk of infection. Common sources of parasite infections include:

- Mom. Most puppies are either born with worms they acquired from their mother in utero or they acquire them from nursing.
- The environment. Dogs may ingest infective eggs or immature worms in the environment, which can easily be picked up through the soil, from feces or, in some cases, dogs can pick up parasites through their skin.
- Ingestion of other animals. Worms are transmitted by hosts such as rodents that have consumed the infective stages and act as intermediate hosts. When a dog eats an animal carcass, it also ingests these infective stages of parasites.

Get to know the major culprits

All dogs are susceptible to intestinal parasites and the best way to defend your dog against these parasites is to understand the threats. The most common parasites seen in dogs in North America include:

Roundworms – Also called ascarids, roundworms are the most common parasite in dogs and especially in young puppies, which are often infected at birth. Large numbers of roundworms may contribute to the “potbelly” appearance of puppies – such large infestations can even be fatal. Female worms can lay several thousand eggs a day, which are then passed in the stool. These eggs can survive in the environment for several years. Most adult dogs become infected through contact with worm eggs in the environment. Canine roundworm infections are zoonotic, meaning they can be transmitted from animals to humans.

Hookworms – Hookworms are smaller than roundworms but still pose a significant threat to the health of the dog. Adult hookworms use their “teeth” to attach to the lining of the dog's small intestine and suck large amounts of blood. Signs include diarrhea, black stools, weight loss, failure to grow properly, white gums, severe blood loss, anemia and even death. When immature hookworms (or larvae) enter through the skin, the dog may experience severe itching or discomfort. Dog hookworm infections are zoonotic and can therefore be transmitted to humans.

Whipworms – Whipworms are small worms that live in the large intestine of the dog. They are prevalent throughout the United States, especially in adult dogs. Like hookworms, dog whipworms attach to the lining of the intestines and suck the dog's blood, but they generally consume less blood than hookworms. Whipworms not only infect dogs, but also wildlife such as foxes and coyotes. Dogs that venture outside, even in suburban areas, are at risk. Although

seldom fatal, whipworm disease is difficult to diagnose and can cause diarrhea, weight loss, blood loss, and anemia.

Taenia Tapeworms – Tapeworms are especially common in outdoor dogs or dogs that are allowed access to the intermediate hosts such as rabbits and rodents. Tapeworms are thin and flat, like strips of tape (hence, the name) – made up of a head from which a series of segments grow. Tapeworm segments containing eggs break off and are passed in the infected dog's stool. The segments may be seen on the stool or clinging on the hair of the dog's hindquarters. Rabbits and rodents eat the eggs and this begins a development stage. The cycle continues when the dog eats the carcass of an intermediate host. While large tapeworms can take up a lot of space in the intestines, they seldom cause severe problems for dogs but can be aesthetically unpleasant or a nuisance to pet owners.

Spot the signs of worms

A dog with a heavy parasite infestation can show several clinical signs, including poor stamina, diarrhea, weight loss, dry or dull haircoat, potbelly (in puppies) and a generally poor appearance. Some dogs will show few if any outward clinical signs, but the parasite infestation still can be causing problems that may get worse when the dog is stressed or is pregnant. Health problems caused by intestinal parasites will vary depending upon several factors such as number and types of worms present. They may even cause death in young dogs or dogs with heavy infestations.

[Sidebar]

If your dog is showing these signs, it might be time for deworming.

- *Poor stamina*
- *Diarrhea*
- *Weight loss*
- *Dry or dull haircoat*
- *General poor appearance*
- *Potbelly (in puppies)*

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Threat to humans

Worms aren't just dangerous to the family dog. They also put people at risk, especially children. Young children are the most vulnerable because of their tendency to put things in their mouths. Most infections in kids and adults happen accidentally by eating roundworm eggs containing immature worms. The worm migrates and can cause illness or blindness.

Hookworms can cause disease in people when they come in contact with the immature worms. Skin irritation occurs when the hookworm larvae (immature worms) enter the skin and migrate causing severe itching and painful tunnel-like rashes.

That's why preventing parasite infestations in dogs is not only important for the overall health of the dog, but also reduces human health risks associated with environmental contamination.

[Sidebar]

Did you know?

Intestinal parasites of dogs pose potential health risks to humans, too. That's why it's so important for dogs that enjoy an outdoor lifestyle to be on a regular deworming protocol. Dogs with worms may not

show severe clinical signs but even a low parasite burden can cause disease and create environmental contamination.

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Choosing the right dewormer

Regular deworming is essential to protecting the health of your dog. But not just any dewormer will do for your outdoor dog. It's important to select a dewormer that is not only effective against the four major intestinal parasites of outdoor dogs but is also extremely safe.

SAFE-GUARD® (fenbendazole) Canine Dewormer is a safe and highly effective treatment for six species of the four major intestinal parasites found in dogs that spend a lot of time outside, including whipworms and *Taenia* tapeworms, which are often missed by other common dewormers. SAFE-GUARD® is the only broad-spectrum canine dewormer with no warnings or contra-indications, and is proven safe for:

- Dogs of all breeds
- Puppies (at least 6 weeks of age)
- Pregnant females
- Older dogs

It is recommended that dogs over 6 months of age be dewormed at least twice a year with Safe-Guard. Dogs readily accept SAFE-GUARD Canine Granules, which come in convenient pre-measured packages helping to ensure a complete and proper dosing. Safe-Guard Canine has no known drug interactions.

Consult your veterinarian

If you suspect your dog may have parasites, consider scheduling an exam and fecal test with your veterinarian. Worms are usually diagnosed by finding eggs when a stool sample is examined under a microscope.

By following your veterinarian's recommendations and having your pet tested for parasites annually, you can protect your dog and your family from potentially harmful parasites all year long. For more information, visit www.safe-guard-for-dogs.com.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION: For animal use only. Do not use in pups younger than 6 weeks. Do not deworm a dog or puppy that is sick. Approximately 1% of dogs had vomiting associated with the use of this product. Consult your veterinarian for help in the diagnosis, treatment, and control of parasitism.

References:

Companion Animal Parasite Council website <https://capcvet.org/guidelines/>

SAFE-GUARD® Canine Website <https://www.merck-animal-health-usa.com/safe-guard/canine/parasites-101>