



Worms

Worms are worrying. Regular worming is essential. Every three months you should worm your dog. Worms that affect dogs are:

Hookworms

Roundworms

Whipworms

Flea tapeworms

Hydatid tapeworms

Hookworms are the most destructive. They burrow into the pet's intestinal wall and suck blood. Signs of hookworms include diarrhoea, dehydration, pale gums, weakness and death (in extreme infestation). Dogs can pick up these worms by eating the eggs from the ground. Larvae present in the environment can penetrate the skin. The cycle from egg to adult worms takes only two to three weeks. Hookworm can also penetrate the skin in humans.

Roundworms are the most common of intestinal worms. They can be up to 10 cm long, are white and can easily be seen in dog faeces. Infection can occur from eating rodents, contaminated faeces and soil. Signs of infection include a "pot belly" appearance, diarrhoea, vomiting and coughing. Roundworm can also affect humans and can cause damage to the liver, eyes and nervous system.

Whipworms occur when pets eat whipworm eggs. Whipworms can survive for up to a year in the bowel of a dog. The eggs of whipworms can survive in the soil for a long time which makes reinfection likely. Symptoms of whipworm can be chronic abdominal pain, diarrhoea and weight loss.

Flea tapeworms are the most common tapeworm and are spread by fleas (usually beginning when a dog eats an infected one). Infection rarely happens in humans. The most common signs of infection in the dog is that your dog "scoots" (drags its bottom along the floor). Worm segments in the faeces or around the anus can often look like rice grains.

Hydatid Tapeworms can be a serious risk to human health. Dogs pick up the tapeworms by eating raw meat and offal infected with cysts.

Worm prevention is important and should include:

- Worming your dog every three months
- Washing your hands regularly
- Avoiding dogs licking you
- Removing dog faeces as soon as possible
- Controlling fleas on your pets