

# PARASITES AND DOGS

## FLEAS ON DOGS

Fleas are tiny insects that feed on blood from animals. Fleas are not only an inconvenience, but they can also cause tremendous anxiety and spread diseases in dogs.

### Flea Facts

- Fleas thrive in damp, dark places like shaded outdoor areas and under optimal temperature and humidity conditions, can live in a home year-round
- A single female flea can lay up to 50 eggs in a day.
- Immature flea stages will remain dormant in carpeting, bedding, baseboards, etc until conditions are appropriate for development.

### Fleas may cause and/or transmit

- Flea allergy dermatitis (FAD), also known as flea bite hypersensitivity
- Anemia
- Tapeworm infection
- Bartonella infection

### Treatment and Control of Fleas

- Even if you only see fleas on one pet, you should treat all pets in the home.
- Furniture, bedding, and high traffic areas should be cleaned frequently.
- Monthly, year-round application of products such as Comfortis, Vectra, etc can keep dogs protected against fleas.

## Ticks on Dogs

Common US tick species include the brown dog tick, American dog tick, deer tick, and lone star tick. These ticks are often located in wooded areas and tall grasses, where they can attach themselves to passing animals and humans.

### Tick Facts

- Although ticks favor wooded areas and tall grasses, some ticks can infest outdoor environments such as homes and kennels
- Ticks have adapted to many different climates and can be found throughout the US.
- Female ticks lay hundreds of thousands of eggs. The eggs mature to larvae, nymphs and then to adults- which can then infest other animals.

## Diseases Transmitted By Ticks

- Rocky Mountain spotted fever
- Ehrlichiosis
- Lyme disease

## Treatment and Control

- Quick removal of ticks can help limit the risk of transmitted diseases (such as Lyme disease), so you should check your pets frequently.
- Extra vigilance is recommended in areas of high tick exposure, such as woods or fields.
- Year-round anti-tick medication is recommended.

# Heartworms in Dogs

Heartworm disease in dogs is caused by the parasite *Dirofilaria immitis*. It is a serious and life-threatening infection, and dogs throughout the US are at risk.

## Heartworm Facts

- Mosquitoes transmit heartworm during feeding by transferring larvae.
- Shortly after the infective larvae mature in the subcutaneous tissue, they migrate to the blood vessels.
- Adult worms can live inside the host for several years.

## Heartworms May Cause

- Respiratory problems
- Heart failure
- Death

## Prevention

- This disease is not contagious and heartworms cannot live in the environment.
- Avoid mosquito breeding areas like standing water.
- Monthly, year round application of heartworm preventative (such as Heartgard)

# Tapeworms In Dogs

Most species of tapeworms that infect dogs (*Taenia* and *Dipylidium*) do not usually cause serious disease, but owners who see tapeworm segments in their pet's feces tend to be repulsed.

## Facts About Tapeworm

- In an infected dog, tapeworm segments are often visible around the dog's anal area.
- Dogs can become infected by ingesting fleas during grooming or by killing rodents or other small animals, and consuming their body tissue.

- Adult tapeworms live in the intestines of the dog and shed segments in feces.

### Tapeworms May Cause

- Weight loss
- Itching near the anal area
- Mild intestinal problems

## Roundworms In Dogs

Adult roundworms live in the intestinal tract and pass eggs in the feces of the host. Roundworms can infect humans, causing a condition called “larval migrans.” Children are at greater risk of infection because of their play and hygiene habits.

### Roundworm Facts

- Dogs can become infected by direct ingestion of eggs or by ingestion of small animals that harbor the parasite.
- Puppies can become infected while still in the uterus or during nursing if the mother is infected.
- Roundworm infections are often not obvious. Adult worms can occasionally be passed in feces or vomit.

### Roundworms May Cause

- Severe diarrhea
- Abdominal pain
- Vomiting
- Intestinal obstruction

## Hookworms in Dogs

Hookworms are voracious bloodsuckers that “graze” along the intestinal lining, biting repeatedly and consuming blood.

### Hookworm Facts

- Adult hookworms live in the dog's small intestines Hookworm eggs are passed in feces and mature to infective larvae in the environment.
- Infection can occur through skin penetration or ingestion.
- Puppies can be infected while nursing from their infected mother.

### Hookworms May Cause

- Bloody diarrhea
- Significant blood loss
- Debilitation
- Death

## Whipworms in Dogs

Whipworms (*Trichuris vulpis*) are blood-feeding parasites that infect dogs by attaching to the large intestines. Heavy infestation can cause extensive intestinal inflammation and hemorrhage.

### Whipworm Facts

- Dogs become infected when they ingest eggs in the environment.
- The eggs are very resistant to temperature and environmental extremes and can live in the environment for years.
- Some infected dogs don't show any signs of infection, so regular fecal tests are helpful for diagnosis.

### Whipworms May Cause

- Severe diarrhea
- Weight loss