



Are humans at risk?

Yes, but the risk is very small.



Cases of roundworm infection (toxocariasis) are rare – but they hit the headlines because they often occur in children, who are more likely to get infected faeces on their hands from playing outside.

Sometimes roundworm eggs can develop into larvae which lodge behind the retina in the eye. This can cause damage – or even blindness.

- Prevent infection by picking up faeces and always using a bag or a 'poop-scoop', washing children's hands before they eat, and worming your pet regularly and thoroughly.
- Roundworm eggs can take about three weeks to become infectious (longer in winter), so old dog mess could be risky. The eggs can remain infectious for up to two years.
- A puppy or kitten born with roundworm can start passing eggs in its faeces when they are two to three weeks old. Make absolutely sure that anyone handling animals washes their hands afterwards – especially young children handling puppies and kittens.
- Threadworms are quite common in children but don't come from animals.
- Common tapeworms in pets cannot be picked up by humans.



Get worm wise

Treat your pets regularly



Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Telephone: 0300 1234 999 | www.rspca.org.uk

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What to do about worms

Even animals which look in top condition can carry worms, so it's very important to worm pets regularly.

Parasitic worms can be serious, and even fatal, in puppies and kittens and some parasites are also a health hazard to humans.

Animals can pick up worms from other infected animals, from eating the larvae or eggs of worms (e.g. in infected faeces or in grass) or from eating raw meat, infected prey animals or infected parasites.

Protect your pets against worms

- **Adult dogs and cats** should be treated regularly (usually every one to three months), whether or not you can see worms. Your vet will advise treatments effective against both roundworm and tapeworm and, as necessary, lungworm.
- **Dogs and cats** should also have regular treatment against fleas which may carry tapeworm larvae.
- **Bitches and queens** should be wormed as a matter of routine, before they are mated – pregnant animals must only be wormed under the direction of a vet.
- **Puppies and kittens** should be treated more frequently against roundworm (usually every two weeks), from the age of two weeks.



Spotting the symptoms

Watch out for odd behaviour, worms in your pet's faeces, and the physical effects of infection.

If you do see worms, you can wrap them up in damp cotton wool – keeping your hands clean – to help your vet identify the infection.

If your dog or cat starts losing weight, this may mean they have worms, so always ask your vet for advice.

Other signs to watch out for are:

- increased appetite
- weakness or diarrhoea
- your pet licking or rubbing their bottom more than usual
- in severe cases, infected puppies and kittens can have a distended abdomen or 'pot belly'.

Worms can cause suffering, illness and even death. A healthy-looking pet can still be infected so ask your vet or a suitably qualified person about available worming treatments.

