

Veterinary

Q: My puppy was just diagnosed with a roundworm infection. Is this usual? Do I need to be concerned?

A: Believe it or not, nearly all puppies are born with roundworm infections. Even in a healthy mother, dormant larval roundworms will begin infecting puppies while they are still developing in the uterus. Once kittens and puppies are born and begin nursing, they will continue to be infected by round and hookworm larvae in their mother's milk.



Christopher A. Lindquist, VMD

For these reasons, it is essential that pet owners begin deworming their kittens and puppies early and often. There are a variety of medications available which are effective in eliminating the specific types of intestinal parasites found in dogs and cats. The diagnosis of most intestinal parasite infections is made based on the microscopic examination of a fecal sample. Your veterinarian will prescribe the appropriate medication depending on the specific type of parasitic infection. One dose of a deworming medication is rarely enough to eliminate all the parasites in an infection, so be prepared to give multiple doses of the recommended medication.

Since puppies and pregnant mothers are almost guaranteed to have parasite problems, it is critical to clean up their fresh feces regularly. After a few days, most worm eggs will hatch and release infectious larvae into the environment. Once in the environment, larvae worms are an infectious risk to most mammals, including people. Immunocompromised people such as: HIV patients, chemotherapy patients, organ transplant patients, diabetics, pregnant women, infants, young children and the elderly, are all especially susceptible to these infections.

In conclusion, your puppy's roundworm infection is a very common problem. You should be directed to deworm your new friend with several doses of medication every two to four weeks. Once your puppy is an adult, you should continue to have fecal samples examined by your veterinarian at least once a year. In order to prevent the recurrence of intestinal parasites, you should deworm your adult dog at least twice a year. If you would like additional information about the risks of intestinal parasites to your puppy and all of your family members, please refer to the Center for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov/healthypets. Thank you and good luck.

Sincerely,
Christopher A. Lindquist, VMD

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