

Internal Parasites

A golden retriever mother dog is lying on a lush green lawn, surrounded by her puppies. The mother dog is looking towards the right, and the puppies are huddled around her, some resting their heads on her. The scene is bright and sunny, with the grass appearing vibrant green.

Intestinal worms are a very common problem in puppies! They are infected from their mothers before birth, after suckling milk, or from their environment. These worms are parasites, in other words, they live at the expense of their host's health, in this case your puppy. Intestinal parasitic infection may cause growth disorders, anaemia, diarrhoea and vomiting in puppies. Effective and regular control and prevention of these parasites is essential to protect not only your puppy's health, but also the health of other dogs and humans that may be in contact.

What types of intestinal worms affect puppies?

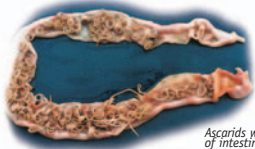
There are several types of worms that can affect your puppy—Ascarids (roundworms), Hookworms, Whipworms and Tapeworms.

Ascarids

● *Ascarids (Toxocara canis) are whitish worms measuring up to 20 centimetres long when adults.* Young puppies are often infested, either directly in their mother's womb or via the milk. These worms survive by living on food given to the puppy. When numerous, they may cause slow growth and loss of weight. Digestive symptoms are frequent: alternation of diarrhoea and constipation, vomiting (of worms, at times), abdominal swelling, and rarely intestinal obstruction and perforation.

● **A danger for humans**

Ascarid eggs eaten by humans, (especially children), cause serious disease related to the migration of larvae through organs of the body (ascarid larva migrans). Infection most often occurs when handling young puppies, which have not been wormed or by playing in areas contaminated by dogs' faeces, such as children's sand-pits, parks and gardens.



Ascarids within a piece of intestine

How to get rid of them?

● The only solution is to administer a wormer, your vet will recommend an effective treatment. If worming treatments are missed, re-infection may occur which can lead to your puppy vomiting adult roundworms despite having been treated in the past.

Tapeworms

● *Dipylidium caninum* is the most common tapeworm (cestode) that affects puppies.

Immature *Dipylidium caninum* tapeworms are found in fleas. Dogs ingest these fleas during grooming and then three weeks later there will be adult tapeworm in the dog's small intestine. Adult tapeworm have a segmented body.

Tapeworm segments (full of eggs) are eliminated with faeces and may emerge on their own. After drying out, they look like small rice grains stuck to the hair around the anus.

Tapeworm infestation usually causes few problems in adult dogs but can slow the growth of puppies and cause poor coat condition and anal irritation.



How to get rid of them ?

● The presence of *Dipylidium caninum* is strongly associated with flea infestation. Dogs become infected with this tapeworm by swallowing fleas, which are already carrying the developing *Dipylidium larvae*! So, fleas act as the intermediate host (or 'carrier') for this species of tapeworm. To be effective, the treatment for this tapeworm must be combined with flea control measures.

There are other tapeworms that can affect your puppy, and some of these can infect humans, causing cysts to develop in the body, so it is important that you discuss the most suitable tapeworm control for your puppy with your veterinary surgeon.

Whipworms

● **Whipworms (*Trichuris vulpis*) are parasites of the dog's large intestine.** They are attached to the intestinal lining and measure from 2 to 4cm. They feed on their host's blood. Heavy infestations may lead to anaemia and bloody diarrhoea (haemorrhagic colitis). Dogs of all ages can be infected by ingestion of whipworm eggs. *Trichuris* eggs are highly resistant and survive in the external environment for several years.

Hookworms

● Hookworms (*Ancylostoma caninum* and *Uncinaria stenocephala*) are important worms because they also pose a health risk to humans. Hookworms have been found to be quite prevalent in both rural and urban foxes, so it is logical to assume that our pets will also be at risk from infestation.

How to get rid of them?

● Not all wormers will kill these worms, seek your vet's advice on treatment.

When is it best to de-worm puppies and dogs?

● **Worming products for dogs are not long lasting.** This is why animals should be re-treated at regular intervals. The de-worming schedule varies with the risk of infection, your vet will be able to advise.

Which anthelmintic to choose for intestinal worms?

Before selecting a wormer, ask yourself the following question.

● **Is the treatment I intend to buy effective against all dog intestinal worms (*Ascarids, tapeworms, whipworms and hookworms*)?**

Your vet can advise.

A good drug has to be effective against all the main dog intestinal parasites. Tablets, powders and oral liquid formulations are available.

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