



Care Guide

Flea and worm prevention.

There are many medications available to treat and protect your pets against parasites. We are always happy to advise you on a specific regime tailored to meet your pet's individual needs.

We will need to know your pets weight in order to prescribe the correct dose of medication.

Some of the most effective products available are 'prescription only medicines' (POM). This is a category of drugs which requires a veterinary surgeon's prescription or authorisation, the conditions for which are:

- Animals must be 'under our care' (registered with us)
- Animals must have been examined by a vet within the last 12 months.

For pets that have not been seen within the last 12 months, we offer a FREE consultation with a vet to discuss the best options available.

When used correctly there are also effective medications which are available without a prescription, but we will still need an up to date weight to make sure your pet is receiving the correct dose.

Regular dosing of wormer and flea treatments is an important factor in maintaining your pet's health, however we understand this subject can be slightly confusing at times. Please do not hesitate to speak to one of our team who will always be happy to talk you through the most suitable products by considering your pet's lifestyle, the time of year and prices.



Fleas

Fleas are little wingless insects with back legs modified for jumping. Most (95%) of the flea's lifecycle happens off the pet and in the environment as eggs, larvae and pupae which is why it's so important to treat the environment (house and car) as well as your pet.

Fleas will pump their saliva into the host before feeding as this prevents the blood from clotting. Proteins in the flea's saliva can cause an allergic reaction known as flea allergic dermatitis (FAD).

A female flea can start laying eggs just 24 hours after her first meal and can lay up to 50 eggs per day!

Fleas will lay their eggs in the hosts coat where they will roll off into the environment as the pet moves around. Under perfect conditions eggs can develop into larvae within 1-6 days. Once the larvae hatch out they move away from the light and develop in carpets or other dark areas in the house. Larvae will feed from animal waste, vegetative matter and blood-rich flea faeces as it falls from the host. Larvae undergo two moults and once they reach the third stage they will spin a cocoon which is difficult to vacuum up and will eventually attract lots of dust and dirt which provides the perfect camouflage to the naked eye. The pupal cocoon is immune to household flea sprays and can easily survive for up to a year in your house when undisturbed. In perfect conditions the development from pupa to adult only takes 8-12 days. For the pupae to hatch it needs warmth, vibration and exhaled carbon dioxide (either from your pet or yourself). Once the flea emerges from the pupae, they jump onto an unsuspecting animal host as they pass and start feeding on blood within minutes.

Checking your pet for fleas

Adult flea's faeces consist of mainly undigested blood and is usually visible as dark little spots within your pet's coat. If your pet's coat is brushed onto some damp tissue paper, flea faeces will often leak a small amount of red/brown blood. This is usually a good indication your pet has fleas, sometimes you may also see fleas buried deep into the pet's coat.



Ticks

Ticks are unable to jump like fleas so find their hosts by lurking on long blades of grass in the hope a host will brush past. Ticks are generally found in rural areas from spring through to autumn. Ticks can transmit disease and bacteria by feeding on both animal and human hosts which is why it's very important to use a preventative medication for your pet.

Ticks have four life stages including egg, larvae, nymph and adult- they also have a three host lifecycle. Ticks need a blood meal from a host in order to moult to their next life stage and an average lifecycle is often completed within three years. Ticks will usually mate on their unsuspecting host before the female drops off to find good conditions to lay her eggs. The female tick will often lay eggs 4-8 weeks after mating, and up to 2000 eggs can be produced. After laying her eggs the female tick dies and larvae hatch out about 8 weeks after.

Once the larvae have hatched they await a host so they can have their first blood meal. Once a host brushes past the tick larvae they will attach themselves and inject their saliva into their host which contains anti-coagulants, anti-inflammatories, and anti-haemostatins. It's at this stage when bacteria and diseases are transmitted from the tick to its host.

Once the larvae have fed they will drop off the host and moult into a nymph, the nymph then goes through the same process of searching for a host and feeding from their blood before dropping off, moulting and becoming an adult tick.

Checking your pets for ticks

Ticks can sometimes be seen crawling through the coat of your pet before latching onto feed. Once the tick has buried under the coat and is feeding they can become harder to find. They are often found when running your hands through the pet's coat and notice a small lump, once the hair is pulled away from the area a tick is sometimes visible. When removing ticks, you have to be very careful not to leave the mouth piece within the pet's skin as this can lead to infection at the site. Tick removers can be bought which often removes ticks easily by gently twisting. If you are worried about removing ticks from your pet, we would be more than happy to remove them at the practice for you.



Roundworms

Roundworms are large white coloured worms with a cylindrical body. Adult roundworms live in the small intestines of their host and feed from gastric contents.

Roundworms will hatch out in the small intestines of their host and often enter the circulatory system before travelling to the respiratory system or other organs and tissues. Once in the respiratory system larvae are coughed up and swallowed again so they return back to the small intestines to mature into adult worms.

If a pregnant bitch is infected with roundworms they can pass through the placenta and infect the foetal puppy, this means the puppy is already infected with roundworms before it's even born. This is why worming a bitch during pregnancy is advised. Kittens and puppies can also become infected with roundworms by ingesting their mother's milk if she is already infected by them. It's advised that kittens and puppies should be wormed every 2 weeks from 2 weeks of age until they reach 8 weeks old.

Adult cats and dogs can become infected with roundworms by ingesting eggs from the environment. Cats that hunt can also become infected with roundworms by eating mice and other small vertebrate hosts that are carrying larvae in their tissues.

Humans can also become infected with roundworms through contaminated food, water, soil and animal faeces. The lifecycle of the roundworm is much the same in humans as it is cats and dogs. Once hatched the larvae will travel into the respiratory system before being coughed up and returning back to the small intestines. As larvae can travel through body tissue they have been known in extreme cases to reach the eye and cause blindness. This is why good hygiene and regularly worming your pet is extremely important.

Checking your pet for roundworms

Symptoms can include pot belly, poor coat, diarrhoea and poor growth. Sometimes the dog or cat will pass worms in their faeces or be seen coughing them up. However, the dog or cat will often not show any signs of being infected. Our team would be very happy to discuss roundworm treatments further with you or find the best treatment for your pet.



Tapeworms

Tapeworms are flat worms that are segmented and live within the small intestines of infected hosts, adult worms can reach 20 inches in length. Each tapeworm contains its own reproductive organs and will develop new segments within the neck region of the worm, those at the end are cast off as they mature. These segments contain a large number of eggs and are passed out in the hosts faeces. These segments look like small grains of uncooked rice and can sometimes be seen moving within the faeces or around the anus of the host.

Tapeworms that infect cats and dogs need an intermediate host to start their lifecycle. These hosts include fleas, fish and domestic animals such as sheep and pigs. Tapeworm is then transmitted to cats and dogs after they ingest the intermediate host. Fleas are easily ingested by cats and dogs while grooming themselves, cats will often catch tapeworm through hunting and dogs may catch them through scavenging on carcasses.

Humans can also become infected with tapeworm, in extreme cases when the eggs are ingested and larvae develop in body tissue they can become walled off and form large cysts.

Checking your pets for tapeworm

Symptoms of tapeworm in pets can include diarrhoea, vomiting and segments of the tapeworm seen in faeces or around the anus. Tapeworm segments can cause some irritation to the host as they are passed, some pets can be seen licking around their anus or 'scooting' on floors to relieve the irritation. Often cats and dogs that are infected with adult tapeworm will show no symptoms of carrying them. This is why regularly worming your pet is very important and our team would be happy to talk through the best treatment for your pet.



Cheyletiella mite in small pets

Cheyletiella is a highly contagious mite that feeds on the keratin layer of the hosts skin. Often this mite is referred to as 'walking dandruff' because of the way it moves beneath the keratin layer, pushing up scales of skin so they appear to be moving. These mites are highly zoonotic and can be passed to both cats and dogs as well as small furry pets such as rabbits and guinea pigs. These mites will often cause mild irritation for the pet, but in young animals with skin abrasions there is an increased chance of infection due to an immature immune system.

The mite's lifecycle often happens on the host, an adult mite will lay her eggs in the coat of the pet which then hatch out into larvae before maturing into nymphs and then adult mites. It is possible for female mites to live off the host for several days, this means pets can become infected from contaminated environments such as bedding.

Cheyletiella can temporarily infect humans causing some itching and irritation but the mite isn't able to survive for a long period of time on the human skin.

Checking your pet for Cheyletiella

The mites will often cause irritation and itching of the infected host. Pets may have a slight hair loss and dandruff might be visible on the pet along with thickening of the skin. It is possible the host may not show any signs of having Cheyletiella though. If your pet is found to have this mite we will find the appropriate treatment for your pet whether it's a guinea pig, rabbit, cat or dog.