



Internal and External Parasites

Roundworms are a common intestinal parasite in cats and can be visualized in the stool. They appear to look like spaghetti. Kittens are born with intestinal parasites, and typically get roundworms from their mothers. Adult pets get roundworms from eggs in the soil, feces, and infected wildlife.

Tapeworms are found in the small intestines of dogs and cats. Cats become infected when they eat fleas, rodents, or rabbits carrying the intestinal parasite. You may visualize tapeworms around the anus, they appear like grains or rice or white chains. Cats cannot directly pass tapeworms to each other.

Hookworms can also be found in cats, causing anemia, weakness, and bloody diarrhea. Infection occurs from swallowing contaminated soil or fecal matter, from immature hookworms burrowing into the skin, or from mother to kittens. Hookworms are not seen in the stool, to determine if your kitten has hookworms a stool sample is evaluated under a microscope to check for the ova (or eggs).

Whipworms occur in cats who swallow contaminated soil. Symptoms include weight loss and intermittent, often bloody, diarrhea. Whipworm eggs are extremely durable and can live in the soil for years. Whipworms can also not be seen in the stool, and so a fecal sample is evaluated under a microscope to look for this intestinal parasite.

Coccidia are single celled intestinal parasites that live in the intestinal wall. Affected kittens may have bloody diarrhea and weight loss. Coccidia do not always cause illness. Your kitten is diagnosed with coccidia by evaluating a stool sample under a microscope.

Fleas thrive when the weather is warm and humid, however, they can be a yearlong external parasite. Your kitten does not have to go outside to get fleas, you can bring them in the home to them! You can see adult fleas on your kitten, they are dark brown, and small in size, think sesame seed small, and can often be found jumping or moving rapidly across your pets' skin. Fleas bite into your kittens' skin, causing an intense reaction between the saliva and the skin that can be itchy and painful. Additionally, female fleas begin laying eggs within 24 hours, and produce up

to 50 eggs a day. These eggs can live on your kitten, on your furniture, in your flooring, and the rest of your home. So, treatment of your kitten with an appropriate flea prevention recommended by your veterinarian is important, in addition to treating your home.

Ticks are a type of external parasite that feed on the blood of your cat or kitten. Cats or kittens who spend time outdoors are at the highest risk of becoming a host for ticks. Ticks are also carriers of various diseases and can be harmful to your cat in a multitude of ways.

Ear mites frequently find homes in kittens and outdoor cats, and they are contagious, which means they can transfer from one kitten to another kitten. Ear mites cause frequent scratching of the ears, head shaking, and a black substance in the ears. If your kitten's doctor suspects that he or she has ear mites, they will take a swab of the ear (with a cotton swab) and examine it under the microscope to confirm.

**We are happy to help you determine which flea, tick, and intestinal parasite prevention would be the best for you and your kitten.*