

WORMS IN CATS: SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENTS



Article checked by a vet

Cat Worms are very common parasites that can affect both indoor and outdoor cats. Pets usually become infected after inadvertently eating the worm’s eggs, which can be present in the faeces of other cats, on the coats of other pets, in prey animals that the cats may interact with and from being in contact with other animals.

Despite how common they are, worms can pose serious health risks to your pet, which is why it is crucial to address symptoms of worms in cats(open in new tab) promptly. The most widely reported health symptoms include vomiting and diarrhoea, however, these can also be associated with cat flu.

In this article, we will help you identify cat worm symptoms, understand the different types of treatments available and address all of the preventative measures you can take to avoid your cat getting worms.

Types of cat worms

What do cat worms look like? There are several types of worms that can affect cats and they each have unique characteristics, sizes, lengths and health implications. The most common **cat worms** are Tapeworms and Roundworms, which are also the most likely to be visible and may look like small grains or seeds. Hookworms can also pose a threat to our pets.

Roundworms

Roundworms are one of the most common intestinal parasites found in cats. Their life cycle ranges from 14 days up to 80 days. Your cat can become infected by eating animals that have been infected, or from coming into contact with contaminated faeces or environments. Roundworms may not cause symptoms, yet most cats will be affected by roundworms during their lifetime. Weight changes, including a pot-bellied appearance, could indicate your cat has a significant roundworm infection. Prolonged roundworm infections in kittens can be fatal and they can also cause serious issues in older cats if left untreated, such as malnutrition or bowel obstructions.

Tapeworms

Tapeworms are another common type of intestinal parasite found in cats. They have a life cycle of 4-6 weeks. Your cat can become infected by eating the raw meat of infected animals, fleas can also carry tapeworm larvae, check out our other article to find out what fleas look like on cats. If left untreated, tapeworms can cause intestinal problems and other health issues. Kittens and older cats are most susceptible to potential health issues from tapeworms.

Hookworms

Hookworms are another type of intestinal parasite found in cats. They have a life cycle of 5-7 days. Your cat can become infected from drinking water infected by hookworm larvae, eating animals infected by them and from larvae attaching to the skin when your cat walks across infected soil, litter or sand. If left untreated, hookworms can cause weight loss in young kittens. Younger kittens and older cats are also more susceptible to more serious health problems like anaemia from blood loss if hookworms are left untreated.

Heartworms

Heartworms are not found in the UK, thankfully. Heartworms are spread from host to host via mosquito bites, they are serious as they live right inside the heart and lungs and will not be visible. If your pet has not left the UK it is unlikely that they will contract heartworm. Heartworm can be harder to diagnose in cats vs dogs. Heartworm symptoms are generally quite severe and include, laboured breathing, coughing, vomiting and/or an abnormal heartbeat if left untreated.

Cat worm symptoms: how can you tell if your cat has worms?

As there are many different types of worms that can infect your cat, which all have different symptoms and health risks, it is very important to be vigilant and recognise cat worm

symptoms early. You should take your cat to the vet if you think they need extensive treatment. Your vet can decide if your pet has a severe worm infection and how often you should worm your cat in order to protect your cat's overall health. The most common signs and symptoms of worms in cats are

Gastro problems: Symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhoea and changes in appetite (both loss and increase), are common indicators of a worm infestation.

Physical signs: Physical signs include visible signs of worms in your cat's vomit or faeces. Roundworms and tapeworms are most commonly found this way as they are visible to the naked eye. The appearance of a bloated or swollen abdomen on your cat can also indicate a severe infestation of worms, however noticing weight loss despite your pet maintaining normal eating habits is also a significant symptom that warrants attention.

Coat health: Your cat's coat can tell you a lot about their health. Dull, rough coats accompanied by skin irritation, especially around the anus, can be indicative of worms.

Behavioural changes: Lethargy, decreased activity levels and lack of interest in the things they usually enjoy are also signs of discomfort or illness in cats that are due to worms.

How are worms in cats diagnosed?

If you suspect that your cat has worms it is important to take them to the vet as soon as possible. The veterinarian will start with a thorough physical examination, looking for signs of worm infestation and assessing your cat's overall health.

You may need to collect several faecal samples in order for the vet to establish which type of worm your cat has. These samples can be taken from the litter tray, it is generally advised to take the samples early in the day. These samples will be checked for the presence of worm eggs or larvae.

Treatment options for cat worms

Untreated cat worm infections can pose serious health risks for cats as mentioned previously, therefore, there is a critical need for proper and timely treatment, in order to ensure the health and well-being of your cat.

Over the counter dewormers are widely available and can be used to get rid of mild cases of **cat worms**, once they have been correctly identified. Correct application and reapplication are key to maximising the effectiveness of these medicines and completely eliminating the worms from your pet and your home.

Vet-prescribed treatments are the most effective route of action for serious or specific worm infestations. Visiting a vet also plays an important role in correctly diagnosing the type of worm your cat has and therefore, choosing the right medication to treat them.

Some pet owners may have heard about homemade, natural remedies (for example: apple cider vinegar) however the effectiveness and safety of these natural remedies cannot be verified by anyone other than a trained veterinarian. It is possible that natural remedies may also cause irritation to your cat. Speak to your vet about any natural remedies before trying them.

Caring for your cat after worms

The best way to soothe your cat is to spend some quality time with them and show them lots of affection and care.

Signs of reinfestation include visible traces of worms in vomit or faeces, as well as the tell-tale physical and behavioural symptoms of worms in cats like diarrhoea, vomiting, lethargy and/or changes in appetite or coat health.

Your cat may continue to feel lethargic after deworming for some time, therefore it is important to reintroduce play and exercise slowly but surely, in order to help your cat regain strength and return to their normal activity levels quickly and without exhausting them in the process.

Regular grooming is also very important post-recovery. Grooming your cat every day will help you effectively monitor skin health and remove any residual debris or parasites during recovery.

Some foods like sensitive cat food formulas may be beneficial while your cat is recovering from worms. High-quality, high-protein cat food will also support their immune system effectively. Supplements containing probiotics, antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids can help bolster your pet’s immune system but always run these past your vet first.

How to prevent worm infestation in cats?

Maintaining a regular deworming schedule as advised by a veterinarian is the best way to manage worm infestation in cats. Your deworming schedule should also be tailored to the cat’s age, lifestyle, and specific health needs

Flea prevention is also an important part of preventing worm infestation, as some worm larvae are carried by fleas. Over the counter flea treatments are available widely and your vet can also prescribe something stronger if you suspect your cat has a severe case of fleas.

Cleanliness is extremely important during an infestation and in order to prevent one. Cleaning out your cat's litter tray regularly and washing their bedding at a high temperature helps to kill and remove any remaining eggs, doing this regularly also works as prevention. You should also clean areas where your cat plays frequently.

Maintaining a healthy and balanced diet, with the right nutrition to support your cat, helps support their immune system and prevents worm infestations from occurring.

Knowledge is power and education on cat worms is key! Being aware of the signs of worms and their transmission routes is the best way to better protect your pets and household from future or potential infestations.

How often should you worm a cat?

Cat worm prevention has huge health benefits for your pet and your household. How often your cat goes outdoors will be a factor in determining how often you should worm your cat.

When can kittens go outside? Decisions about when to let your kitten go outdoors can also

play a factor in worm prevention.

Deworming kittens is slightly different to deworming adult cats, so it is best to consult with your vet before deworming kittens. You will also need to adjust the treatment based on the pet's age and weight.

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions but as a general guide, for kittens we suggest starting to deworm at 3 weeks old, repeating the dose every 2 weeks until they are 8 weeks old, and then repeating monthly until they reach 6 months of age.

For adult cats we suggest deworming every 1 to 3 months, adjusting this based on lifestyle and exposure risks (indoor cats are less likely to be infected).

Conclusion:

Maintaining a healthy and nutritious diet with good quality cat food promoting a strong immune system is also recommended. This will help keep your pet’s immune system in tip-top shape so they can fight off any health issues faster. However, if your pet is eating a lot more it could also be a sign of worms, so keep this in mind.

Ultimately, worms are easily treatable and shouldn’t cause serious health concerns if they are caught early and treated successfully, so don’t panic too much if/when you encounter them! Your cat will be feeling better in no time as long as you get them treated swiftly.

Cat worms: FAQ

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1. **Can cat worms infest your house?**

   Yes, worms can enter your home via your cat. Cleanliness is a key preventive measure, this includes regularly changing litter trays and removing all faeces, washing bedding on a high heat to kill worm eggs and washing areas that your cat frequently plays in.

2. **Are cat worms contagious to humans?**

   Unfortunately, yes. Protecting human health by regularly worming your cat is just as important as hand washing and hygiene within the home.

3. **Is kitten having worms an emergency?**

   Worms in kittens can generally be treated quickly and without serious health complications, however, they can pose a more serious threat if left untreated in kittens for a prolonged period of time.

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