

Fleas and Worms

Maintaining a regular programme of flea and worm protection can keep your pet healthy and protect your family.

Preventing fleas and worms is essential to maintain your pet in the very best of health. There are a number of products available and the vet will discuss your pet's lifestyle to recommend the simplest most effective treatment options.

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Fleas

Fleas are one of the most important causes of skin problems in dogs and cats. Some pets suffer from an allergic reaction to the flea saliva and need only a couple of bites to trigger a severe skin reaction. Fleas also transmit the common flea tapeworm and can cause anaemia in severe cases. Pet fleas will also bite people although they cannot live on humans.

Signs of Flea Infestation

- **Frequent scratching or intense irritation**
- **Tiny black specs of 'flea' dirt in the pet's fur.**
- **Small spots or scabs on the skin**
- **Areas of skin irritation or hair loss**

Flea Facts

- **The fleas we see are a very small percentage of the total house and pet infestation.**
- **Flea pupae can live dormant in our carpets for up to a year.**
- **Fleas can infect our pets with tapeworm.**

How Fleas Spread

To understand how to control fleas on our pets we need to understand the flea lifecycle.

1. Only the **adult fleas** are present on our pets. These make up less than 5% of the total flea population.
2. Each adult female flea can lay up to **2000 eggs**. These drop off your pet into carpets, upholstery and bedding in your home.
3. The eggs hatch into **larvae (grubs)**, which live off detritus and flea droppings in carpets, furniture or pet bedding, after which they pupate. The pupa (cocoon) can remain dormant for more than a year.
4. **Pupae** are stimulated into hatching by the movement and warmth of passing pets or people. The adult fleas emerge jumping and are ready for their first blood meal.

Most of the fleas that jump onto our pets come from eggs that are laid in our homes.

Control of Fleas

1. Treat your pets to kill adult fleas

Anything that kills adult fleas on your pet needs to be safe, easy to apply and effective.

We recommend **a prescription only treatment**

- This is a 'spot on' treatment, which is easily applied directly to the skin on the back of your pet's neck.
- It kills existing fleas within 24 hours and gives protection for 4 weeks.
- It is not absorbed into your pet's blood stream and does not contain organophosphates.
- It is easier to dose than sprays or tablets and thus is very popular with cat and dog owners alike.

2. Treat your home to kill eggs and larvae

- Vacuum all areas where your pet sleeps then throw away the vacuum cleaner bag.
- Remember to vacuum the car too if your pet travels with you.
- Wash all pet bedding at 60 degrees centigrade.
- Spray your home with **a recommended household insecticide**. This will kill existing eggs and prevent re-infestation for up to 12 months

It is important to keep up to date with you pet's treatment. Monthly treatment of all pets in the household will prevent re-infestation of the environment so that further spraying of the house may be unnecessary.

Worms

All cats and dogs will get worms at some stage in their lives. In puppies and kittens an infestation of these parasites can be a serious health concern and may even be life threatening. Adult pets may carry worms with few symptoms beyond a dull coat, possible weight loss and lethargy.

There are several different species of worm.

The two most common in the UK are:

Roundworms (Toxocara)

These white worms look like pieces of string. 40% of puppies have them living in their intestine and 25% of dogs carry the eggs in their fur. Roundworms are a particular public health concern as they may be transmitted to humans via swallowing the microscopic eggs found in untreated pet's fur and in the grass after pets have been to the toilet.

Cats often become infected with Roundworm after catching mice and voles carrying worm larvae.

Both pups and kittens catch these worms from their mothers – they can be passed via the milk when suckling.

Tapeworms

These attach themselves to the small intestine and can grow up to 5 metres long. They appear as flat ribbon shaped pieces or pale segments the size of a grain of rice which are filled with eggs in the faeces or escaping from the pet's anus. Often pets become infected whilst grooming by swallowing fleas that are carrying tapeworm larvae. These larvae soon turn into adult worms.

Roundworm and Tapeworm Control

Puppies and kittens first come into contact with worms from their mothers and so pets should be treated from an early age.

The worming tablets we recommend are safe, easy to administer and may be concealed in food. They are effective with a single dose and proven to control every type of intestinal worm normally found in UK pets. Spot- on wormers are also available for cats and in combination with flea prevention for dogs and cats. Our vets can advise on the most suitable product for your pet.

While worming will rid your pet of any worms present in the intestine at the time of treatment it will not prevent re-infection.

It is important to treat your pet every 3 months.

Complete Protection

The Flea and Worm products we recommend provide effective protection and are dispensed with your pet's particular needs in mind. To enable us to dispense regular flea and worm protection, we will register your pet with us and offer an annual health check during which we will record his or her weight to ensure a safe and effective dose is given.