

Intestinal Worms and your Pet

Dr Clare Middle BVMS, Dip.Ac.,Dip.Hom.

How to safely protect your pet from intestinal worms with only the minimal essential use of chemical products.

Pups and Kittens

I generally use a good pharmaceutical veterinary wormer for puppies and kittens, as they can commonly have roundworm (*Toxocara* sp), which can cause damage to the internal organs if allowed to proliferate, and cannot be detected by checking the stools. Worming a new pup or kitten when you first get them (about 8 weeks), and then again 6 weeks later, will totally rid them of roundworms, as the second dose kills the 'next generation' of worms before they breed. The roundworm can very occasionally directly infect people, although this is very rare.

Pups and kittens, and their mums who have recently given birth, have a poor immunity at this age, so this is really the best way to go. I have had several clients use herbal wormers on pups, kittens and their mums, and it has not been strong enough to kill the worms, confirmed by checking the faeces under a microscope.

Older pets

Older pups and kittens and adult pets generally have far fewer worms as their immune systems have become competent. Roundworms are far less likely.

Tapeworms (*Dypilidium* sp) are common, which are the common tapeworms of dogs and cats, and these can be passed on by fleas, eating other dogs and cats faeces, or close contact with a visiting pet. It is very unlikely your pet will pick up fleas or worms going for a run at the park or beach, unless they are a 'poo' eater.

If you regularly have friends or family bring their pets to your house to visit, synchronise your flea and worm treatment – this will mean all of you will only occasionally need to do this, not continually all year round due to your pets continually re-contaminating each other.

Pets who do not 'house visit' and who don't have fleas, are unlikely to have worms, so if your pets don't have worms, don't do anything!

Important - *If you are unlucky enough to live in a hydatid or whipworm area, you will need to use the local recommendations, including conventional medications, for worming.*

Herbal and Homeopathic Worming Products

There are many good herbal wormers available. They usually contain wormwood, cloves, black walnut hull, euphorbia and others. Remember that wormwood especially can be toxic in very large doses, but is safe if used as directed.

There are also homeopathic wormers available. They contain such remedies as Cina, crab apple Bach remedy and others, or a nosode made of the specific parasite in a 30C or higher potency can be effective (especially in herds or breeding colonies with a specific problem parasite).

I use Cina, Felix Mas, Trichonose and Granata 30C or 200C daily for a week, as this has been shown to work well on humans in recent research. Interestingly, about 80% of humans with inflammatory bowel disease have intestinal parasites, and natural worming can be an important part of their naturopathic treatment.

If you see no tapeworm segments – they look like little white moving rice grains – in your animals faeces, then they are unlikely to have any tapeworms left. This 'poo observation' is a reliable test, but if you want to do the microscope test once that will give you confidence in your herbal or homeopathic wormer. I know of several cases where sheep, goats or other animals have had worms resistant to the usual worming chemicals, and homeopathic or herbal wormers have worked well.

Research has been carried out on sheep with worms, and both wormwood, and Strongyle 30C nosode, given at separate times, were found to get rid of 70% of the worms. With a less severe problem, healthier sheep, and further dosing, this % would have been even higher.

Garlic has been shown to be an effective wormer for several species of animal, but don't exceed one clove per large dog daily, below this dose it is a safe and effective supplement.

These natural products will work especially well for biodynamically farmed stock, and dogs and cats on natural diets with minimal chemical and vaccination exposure.

Important principle for a pet of any age.

The best way to 'worm' your pet is to get your vet to screen the pet's faeces under a microscope. If there are no eggs/larvae, your pup/kitten has no worms, so you don't need to use anything to worm them, pharmaceutical or natural!

Repetition of Worming

As stated above, only worm when you need to.

However, some people like to use a natural wormer 'in case'. Even with homeopathics, I don't like to repeat them unnecessarily as they are still altering the energy of the animal, so I think twice yearly for a week is plenty for 'routine' natural worming.

© Clare Middle 2015