



勝利動物醫院
Victory Animal Hospital

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Hookworm Infection in Cats

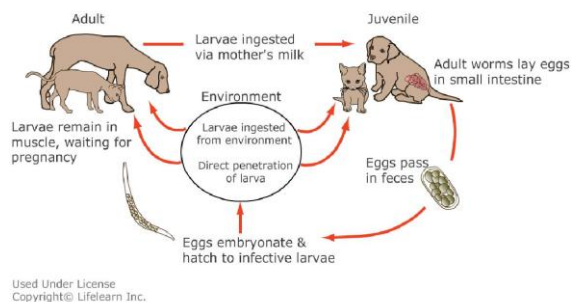
What are hookworms?

Hookworms are intestinal parasites of the cat and dog. Their name is derived from the hook-like mouthparts they use to anchor themselves to the lining of the intestinal wall.

Are some cats more likely to get hookworms?

Hookworms are more common in warm, moist environments. **Conditions of overcrowding and poor sanitation contribute to infection.**

How do cats get hookworms?



Female hookworms pass hundreds of microscopic eggs in the cat's stool. The eggs are not visible to the naked eye. *Larvae* or immature hookworms will hatch from the eggs and persist in the soil for weeks or months. When a cat inadvertently swallows larvae, often by grooming its feet, a hookworm infection is established.

What are the clinical signs of feline hookworm infection?

Feline hookworms tend to "graze" along the lining of the small intestine, and are considered "tissue feeders.". When they do suck blood, an anti-coagulant substance is injected at the feeding site. Therefore, the cat can suffer blood loss from the hookworm's feeding as well as continued bleeding into the bowel from the hookworm's attachment sites. The blood-loss anemia attributed to hookworms is a more significant problem in kittens than adult cats.

Evidence of hookworm infection includes anemia, the presence of digested blood in the stool, a poor hair coat, and weight loss.

How is hookworm infection diagnosed?

Hookworm infection is diagnosed by a technique called fecal flotation. A small amount of the cat's stool is mixed into a special solution, causing the hookworm eggs to float to the top and adhere to a glass slide that has been placed on the top of the solution.

The eggs are easily identified under a microscope because of their unique appearance.

How is feline hookworm infection treated?

Fortunately, treatment is safe, simple, and relatively inexpensive. After administration of the deworming medication called an *anthelmintic*, the adult hookworms are killed.

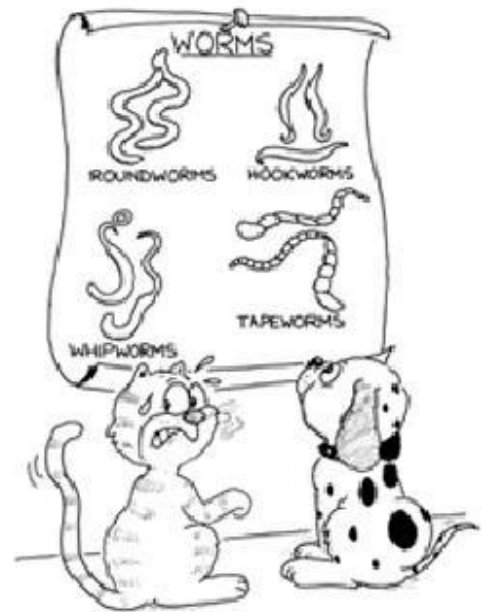
However, most anthelmintics do not kill the larval stages. Therefore, at least two treatments are needed, given at two to three week intervals, to kill adults that matured after the previous treatment. Ideally, kittens are treated for worms during their kitten vaccination series.

Can hookworms be prevented?

Prevention of hookworm infection should include the following measures:

"All newborn kittens should be treated with a veterinary-approved anthelmintic by two to three weeks of age."

- All newborn kittens should be treated with a veterinary-approved anthelmintic by two to three weeks of age. To break the life cycle of the most common intestinal parasites effectively, your veterinarian will recommend a schedule that is appropriate for your kitten.
- Prompt treatment for worms should be given when any parasites are detected; periodic routine deworming may be appropriate for cats at high risk for re-infection.
- Use of a monthly heartworm preventive that also prevents hookworm infection is highly recommended.



"Appropriate disposal of cat feces..."

- Appropriate disposal of cat feces, especially away from yards and playgrounds, is important.
- Strict hygiene is especially important for children. Do not allow children to play in potentially contaminated environments. Be mindful of the risk posed by public parks and non-covered sandboxes. Sandboxes that have fitted covers are popular and help to prevent infection of children with intestinal parasites.
- Control of rodents is important since they may play a role in transmission of hookworms to cats.

"Stool should be removed from litter boxes daily..."

- Stool should be removed from litter boxes daily, if possible. Always wash hands after handling fecal material.

Can hookworms be transmitted to humans?

Feline hookworms do not infect humans internally. However, the tiny larvae can burrow into human skin, causing a disease called *cutaneous larval migrans*. Also known as "ground itch", this skin infection does not lead to maturation of the larvae. Because contact of human skin with moist, larvae-infected soil is required, infection rarely occurs when good hygiene is practiced.

This client information sheet is based on material written by: Ernest Ward, DVM

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