

New Era Veterinary Hospital Factsheet:

Please phone 01534 730521 for further advice or guidance, if your questions remain unanswered or if you are unclear about any of the following information.

WORM AND YOUR CAT

What are worms?

Worms are parasites that live inside your cat, the most common being **Roundworms** (*Toxocara*), which are long, thin and “worm-like”, and **Tapeworms** (*Dipylidium* and *Taenia* species), which are long and flat with segments that look like large grains of rice; they are mobile and may be seen on the hair around the bottom.

What can worms do to my cat?

Worms are widespread and most of the time even if your cat is infected there will be no obvious signs. However, heavy worm infections can cause vomiting, diarrhoea, weight loss and weaken your cat’s immune system. It is also unpleasant and potentially embarrassing to find a tapeworm segment on yourself or the clothes of a visitor who has been making a fuss of your cat.

Are worms dangerous to me and my family?

Yes! The greatest threat to human health is the eggs of the roundworm (*Toxocara*). Whilst human infections are rare they can be very serious, causing blindness, lung or heart problems, or even fits. Children are most at risk and it is this potential danger that is one of the reasons behind the worming advice provided by veterinary surgeons.

How does my cat get worms?

Kittens are infected with roundworm larvae from the mother, mainly via the mother’s milk. They can also be infected by ingesting eggs from the environment, where other cats have defaecated; these are picked up when the cat is outdoors and then swallowed during normal grooming and cleaning. Tapeworms can be picked up when pets groom themselves and swallow fleas, which carry tapeworm eggs. They can also be infected with a different type of tapeworm if they hunt and eat their prey.

How can I protect my cat and my family from these parasites?

Kittens should be wormed at 2,5 and 8 weeks of age, then monthly until 6 months old. If you have children, then it is advisable to continue monthly treatment; if not, then every 3 months is acceptable, but you may need to worm more frequently if your cat is a hunter. **We strongly advise you NOT to use “over the counter” supermarket/pet shop products.** They will often be inadequate giving you a false sense of protection, and occasionally problems with toxicity can arise. For most situations we use either selamectin (Stronghold) or milbemycin (Milbemax). Your vet or nurse can advise you which is the most appropriate.

In summary:

1. Worms are a threat to the health of your pet and your family.
2. Worms are very common in our pets.
3. Regular worming is essential to control parasites, even in indoor cats.