What can I do?

Responsible pet parasite control can reduce the risks associated with transmission of parasitic diseases from pets to people. By following a few simple guidelines, pet owners can better protect their pets and their family.

- Practise good personal hygiene.
- Use a preventative flea and/or tick treatment year-round.
- Only feed pets cooked or prepared food (not raw meat).
- Minimise exposure to high-traffic pet areas.
- Clean up pet faeces regularly.
- Visit your veterinarian for testing and physical examination.
- Administer worming medications as recommended by your veterinarian.

Ask your veterinarian about parasite infection risks and effective year-round preventative control measures.

For more important information about parasite control guidelines, ask your veterinarian.

What is a zoonotic disease?

Zoonoses, or zoonotic diseases, are those diseases that can be transmitted directly or indirectly from animals to humans. For example, some worms can be transmitted to humans.

What is a vector-borne disease?

Vector-borne diseases are those transmitted by fleas or ticks among other parasites that infest dogs and cats. They can affect pets and people.

Reducing risks for your family

You can reduce the risk of parasitic infection to your family by eliminating parasites from pets, restricting access to contaminated areas, such as litter trays, pet “walk areas” and other high-traffic areas, and practicing good personal hygiene.

Disposing of pet faeces on a regular basis can help remove potentially infective worm eggs before they become distributed in the environment and are picked up or ingested by pets or humans.

Year-round prevention

Parasites can infect your pet any time of year. External parasites, such as fleas and ticks, may be less prevalent outside during certain times of the year, however, they often survive in the house during the winter months, creating an uninterrupted life cycle. Other internal parasites, such as worms, may affect your pet all year long. That’s why it’s important to consult with your veterinarian to implement a year-round parasite control program.
Pets, Parasites and People

Dogs and cats are not just pets. They are treated like members of the family. Like any member of your family, it’s important to keep your companion healthy and free of parasites. It is very common for dogs and cats to be infected with internal or external parasites during their lifetime. Parasites can affect your pet in a variety of ways, ranging from simple irritation to causing life-threatening conditions if left untreated. Some parasites can even infect and transmit diseases to you and your family.

Your veterinarian can help prevent, accurately diagnose and safely treat parasites and other health problems that not only affect your dog or cat, but threaten the safety of you and your family.

Common questions about pets and parasites

What kind of internal parasites or worms can infect my cat or dog?

There are a number of intestinal worms that can infect dogs and cats. In general, these include roundworms, hookworms, whipworms and tapeworms, and they are very prolific. In fact, one worm can produce more than 100,000 eggs per day, which are then passed in the pet’s faeces and spread throughout the area the pet roams. Once in the environment, some of these eggs can remain infective and present a health risk for your pet and humans for years.

Are heartworms a parasite I should be concerned about for my pet?

Yes. Heartworms can be a very serious problem for both dogs and cats, especially those in mosquito-infested areas, as mosquitoes are a vector and intermediate host for the pest. Heartworms can kill or seriously debilitate pets that are infected with them. That's because heartworms live in the bloodstream, lungs and heart of infected pets. Your veterinarian can do a blood test to determine if your pet has heartworm disease. A year-round preventive program is the most effective to keep pets free of heartworms.

If my dog or cat has intestinal worms, how can these parasites infect humans?

Roundworms are a common intestinal worm of pets and pose a risk of transmission to humans. Humans can accidentally ingest infective worm eggs that have been passed through the pet’s faeces and left in the environment. The eggs can then hatch in the human’s intestinal tract, and the immature worms can travel to various tissues in the body, including the eyes and brain, potentially causing serious infections.

Do fleas and ticks on my pet present a health risk to my family?

Yes. Fleas and ticks can carry and either directly or indirectly transmit several potential illnesses to humans. For example, Bartonellosis (infection with Bartonella) is transmitted between cats by fleas and then may spread to people. Also, fleas serve as an intermediate host for tapeworms, which can infect both your pet and on rare occasions humans.