

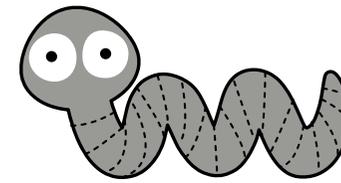


Cats and Worms

Advice For Your Pet



Cats and Worms



Article Features

What are worms

How your cat can get worms

How to prevent worms

Worms and their symptoms

How to respond to them



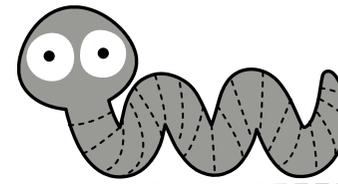
Ensuring that your cat is fit and healthy throughout its life is important, though can often be difficult without a good understanding of the things that felines can come up against during their lifetime. As one of the more misunderstood and overlooked issues by owners, worms are something that can be easily avoided with prevention, though if they are left untreated, they can harm a cat's wellbeing and ability to defend itself against other conditions which may take advantage of a weakened immune system.

This means it's important to know the tell-tale signs and act fast to address

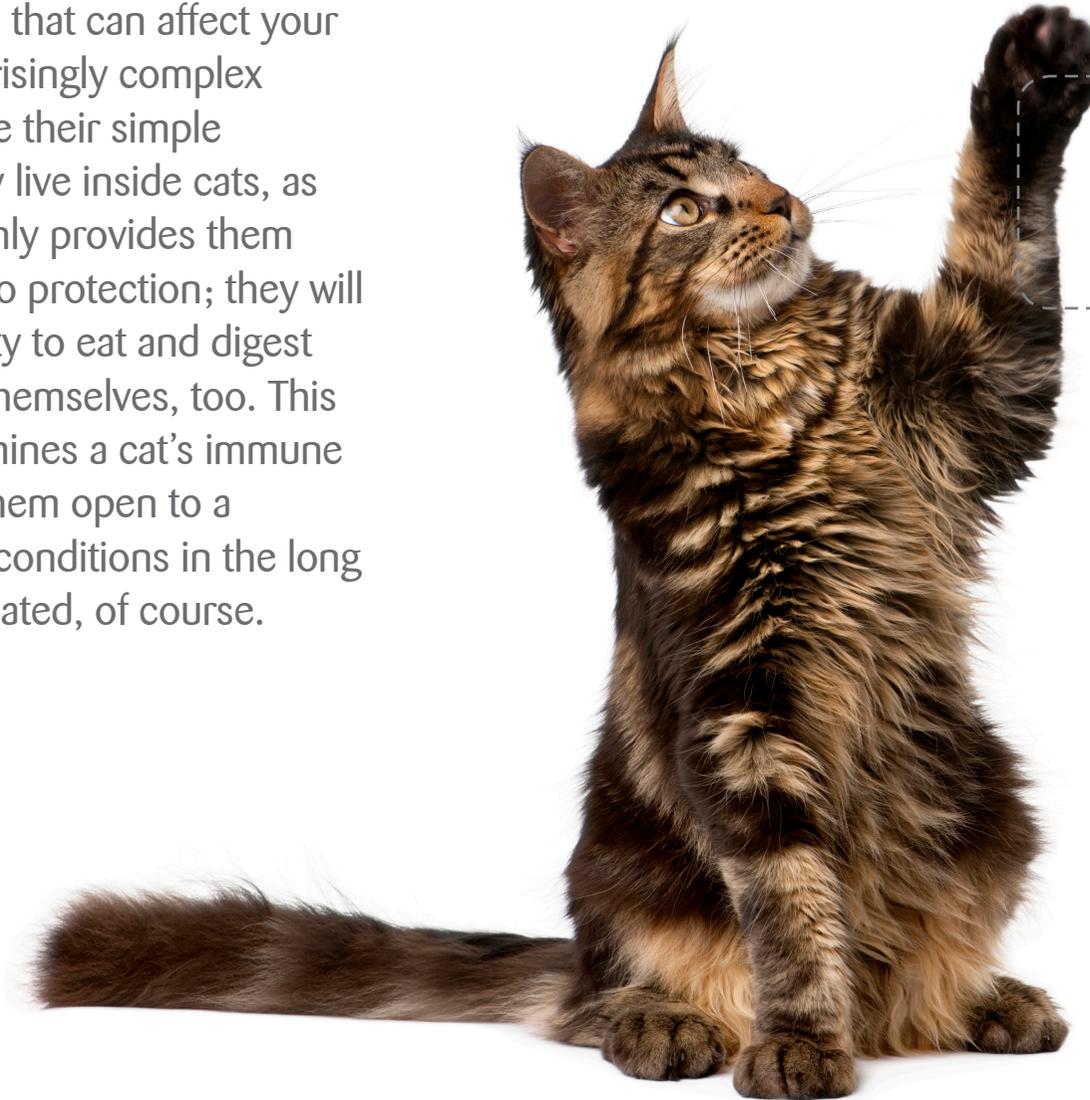
worms with the guidance of trained experts; with Pets at Home's flea and worm advisors ready and willing to help you out in-store today, we want you to understand the basics of these parasites, ensuring that you're fully-prepared to prevent the chance of your feline friend coming into contact with them.



What Are Worms?

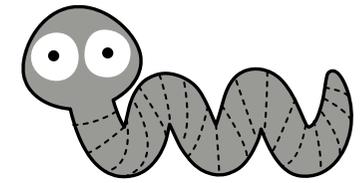


Worms are one of the more unpleasant things that can affect your cat, and are surprisingly complex organisms despite their simple appearance. They live inside cats, as this habitat not only provides them with food, but also protection; they will affect a cat's ability to eat and digest in order to feed themselves, too. This ultimately undermines a cat's immune system, leaving them open to a number of other conditions in the long term - if left untreated, of course.



Worms will affect a cat's ability to eat and digest food.

How Can Your Cat Get Worms?



Worms spread in a variety of ways, though most of these means are shared by different worm types. While it is very important to protect your cat from worms with regular over-the-counter treatments, it pays to know where they come from to understand the key threats to your cat's health.



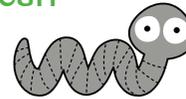
From fleas

Fleas are common carriers of worms, as flea larvae can ingest tapeworm eggs. Fleas also provide a suitable environment for worm eggs to develop, much like a cat's digestive tract. While flea bites won't pass the infection, ingestion will - such as when your cat cleans itself.

Through hunting other animals

Mice, birds and other small animals that are naturally hunted by cats can also carry eggs, and these can be passed on through eating this live prey - something to keep a close eye on, should you receive a gift from an outdoor cat.

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From their mothers

Kittens are susceptible to catching worms from their mother, as they can be passed through nursing and feeding either from the placenta when born, or through the milk itself. If you own both a mother and her kitten and one shows signs of infection, there is a possibility that the other may have worms, too.



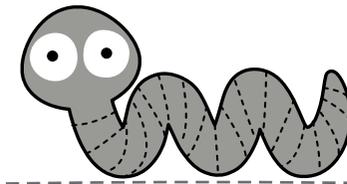
Via beetles and other small insects

Other insects may also carry worm eggs. Eating a host animal that has acquired larvae in its tissues - such as a beetle - is another common way that worms make their way into a cat's body.

From the ground

Finally, cats acquire worms by ingesting eggs directly from soil, whether licking the ground or cleaning their feet after being outdoors. Larvae will be released once hitting a cat's digestive tract.

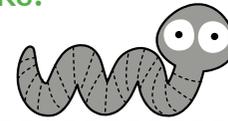
How to Prevent Worms



It's important to get into the habit of using regular preventative measures against parasites. Cats should be wormed once every three months, as a minimum; by asking a qualified flea and worm advisor from Pets at Home for advice, you can find out one of the many ways you can keep your cat worm-free.

These include products such as those offered by Drontal, which are known for their effectiveness against most types of intestinal worm. Most companies produce medication that can be given to your pet in the form of tablets, granules, pastes, syrups and drops - we can help you choose which one is best for your cat!

It is nonetheless important to groom cats as this will prevent them from falling prey to fleas and ticks.



is also important to keep soft furnishings in the home clean, and carefully vacuuming or steam cleaning carpets and rugs. Cat bedding can be a popular breeding ground for fleas, so do not forget to clean this, too.

Cat litter boxes should also be cleaned on a regular basis, and changed daily. If left alone, segments of any existing worm infections may be picked up by mites and fleas, which can then spread the disease further.

While cats are well known for keeping themselves clean, it is nonetheless important to groom cats as this will prevent them from falling prey to fleas and ticks.

Given that cats can contract worms from rodents, it is important to take necessary steps to prevent them from coming into, or near to, your home. Lots of traditional and humane means of stopping these from entering your home are available at reasonable prices.

If your cat is pregnant, then consider giving it worm medication to prevent the infection from being passed on to their offspring both in the womb and during the nursing stages. Whilst many treatments are safe to use on pregnant cats, it's important to always check the label, and advisable to consult your vet before starting treatment.

If you own other pets that show signs of illness, separate them from healthy cats - and check on them regularly, in case the infection has already started.

Tips for preventing worms in your home

There are a number of ways that you can help stop worms from spreading or multiplying in your home. While some of the following tips are simple lifestyle changes, other prevention tactics are often overlooked, and may have led to other infections in the past - if you've had the misfortune of dealing with worms in the past!

It is important to continually check your cat for signs of fleas; whether your cat shows signs of them or not, it



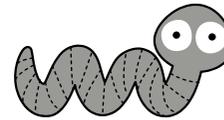
Types of Worms and Their Symptoms

Most people have heard of the different worms that can affect their pet, though their varied behaviour from cat to cat can make it hard to diagnose them. With this in mind, professional advice must always be sought; if there is any doubt about your pet's health, speak with your vet.



Roundworms are perhaps the most common worms found in cats. Traditionally resembling spaghetti, fully-grown adult worms can be as long as three or four inches, and are milky white or light brown in colour; their ends also taper slightly.

Roundworms are perhaps the most common worms found in cats.



Symptoms of roundworms include:

- Signs of worms in stool
- Diarrhoea
- Vomiting, with or without roundworms present;
- Weight loss, or inability to gain weight
- Pot-bellied appearance
- A dull coat
- Possible coughing, if worms migrate to the lungs

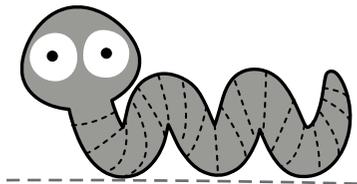
Tapeworms are long, flat and segmented worms that can range between 12cm and over one metre in length. They will fasten themselves to the wall of the intestines using hooks and suckers; as such, the head must be destroyed in order to kill the infestation outright. The body itself is composed of rice-shaped segments that contain egg packets, which result in more worms if left untreated. Similar variants can affect humans as well as other pets, though cat tapeworms are only spread to humans in very exceptional circumstances.

Symptoms of tapeworms include:

- Vomiting
- Weight loss
- Constant hunger
- Rice-like worm segments in stool
- Worm segments found around a cat's rear

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How You Can Treat Your Pet



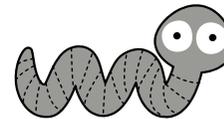
While prevention is always the best way to stop infection, there are a number of ways you can respond to one, if your cat has worms. If you catch a case of worms early, they will naturally be easier to control and easier to address with advice from an advisor or vet; here, we explain both over-the-counter and vet-led treatments.



Over-the-counter treatments

Firstly, it is necessary to consult a qualified vet or one of Pets at Home's flea and worm advisors before you buy over-the-counter treatments. On top of this, you should always use it exactly as directed on the packaging, paying attention to how large a dose you need to give your cat - it may be regulated by age or body weight. Pets at Home requests you answer questions to confirm that you understand how to use such treatments before buying them in store or online, though we always prefer for you to come into the store for a face-to-face chat.

Over-the-counter treatments are, by and large, capable of dealing with every major type of worms.



Over-the-counter treatments are, by and large, capable of dealing with every major type of worms, though roundworms and tapeworms tend to be the primary.

Many products are ingested through food. Granules, for example, are made to be sprinkled on meals to effectively treat roundworms and tapeworms. Drops

are available for cats, too - these are applied with tubes directly onto the skin, usually at the base of the neck, however this drop treatment only treats tapeworm. Of course, tablets are also available, while alternatives may also come in syrup or paste form.

It is necessary to consult a qualified vet or one of Pets at Home's flea and worm advisors before you buy over-the-counter treatments.



Preventatively-speaking, adult cats ought to be treated with treatments capable of working against both roundworms and tapeworms every two to six months; this will depend on your cat, and the way they live (hunting, spending lots of time outdoors, etc.).

Veterinary treatments

If your cat's case of worms is quite severe or cannot be treated using over-the-counter medication, you should seek veterinary advice. They will be able to prescribe a course of prescription only medication for your pet.