



Whipworms: A Client Handout

Pets are members of the family and it is our pleasure and honor to treat your family member. This handout is intended to educate pet parents about **Whipworms** as well as introduce your family to some of the terms and treatments that accompany this diagnosis.

What are whipworms?

Whipworms are parasites that live in the intestines of infected dogs, coyotes, and wolves. Although infrequent, cats may also become infected. Adult whipworms are shaped very thin at the front and become wider towards the rear.

Is my family at risk?

Whipworms are not a zoonotic parasite, meaning they cannot be transmitted from pets to humans.

How does infection occur?

Pets are infected with whipworms through the oral ingestion of whipworm eggs passed in the feces of infected dogs. This often occurs when dogs are cleaning their paws. The period from ingestion of eggs to passing eggs in the feces is 74-90 days. Eggs can survive for years outside the host in the environment.

How do I know if my Pet is infected?

Many pets will initially show no sign of infections. Whipworms can cause mild to extreme illness in pets and in some cases lead to death.

Whipworm infection can lead to:

- Bloody Diarrhea
- Severe Weight Loss
- Dehydration
- Severe Anemia

Your veterinarian can diagnose whipworms by performing a fecal examination. Fecal examinations should be performed twice yearly and anytime your pet is exhibiting any clinical signs.

How are whipworms treated?

Whipworms are typically treated with oral medications. A follow-up fecal examination is usually performed after treatment to ensure the whipworm infection is resolved. If the infection is still present, the oral medication may need to be repeated. Cleaning the environment your pet lives in is very important. One percent bleach solutions and direct sunlight can aid you in cleaning up the pet's environment, but the eggs can be very hardy.

What can I do to protect my pet?

- Schedule twice yearly physical exams and fecal exams for your pets
- Treat an infected pet immediately
- Quickly clean up after your pets to remove potentially infective eggs from their environment.
- Avoid places where there is a high concentration of fecal matter from other dogs or wildlife.
- If you do take your dog to the dog park or on a hike and they encounter feces from other pets or animals, it is beneficial to wash their feet to avoid ingestion of any eggs that might be on their feet.