

## Hookworms

A parasite is an organism that lives at the expense of another living being. Internal parasites, like Intestinal worms and heartworms, live inside the body. Dogs and cats are subject to a variety of internal parasites, but some parasites are species specific (for example, heartworms are generally found only in dogs). In this chapter we will look at what you need to know about the more common internal parasites.

### Description

Hookworms are a very serious parasite problem, especially in young animals. The hookworm attaches itself to the intestinal wall and ingests blood. When left untreated, hookworms can cause "hookworm anemia," which can often be fatal. Paleness of the gums and tongue and a black, tarry stool are the main signs of hookworm infestation.

The hookworm larvae can penetrate the skin to infect its host. This includes humans! Great care should be taken when cleaning an area infected by hookworms. Always wear gloves, and never walk or allow children to play barefoot in or around the infected area.

### Treatment

Since hookworm eggs pass out in the stool, they can be detected by a fecal flotation test. If hookworms are present, the doctor gives the animal worm medication. Infected pets should be rechecked and/or dewormed again in several weeks.

### Prevention

Prevention is much the same as that described for roundworms. Keeping the yard clean and free of stools and checking the animal for worms at an early age will help prevent infestation. Sprays that kill hookworm larvae are available for yards should an infestation occur, and oral medication, taken daily or monthly. Is available to control hookworms and is included in many heartworm preventions.