

Roundworms

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.

Description

Adult roundworms attach to the wall of the intestine and drain protein from the host. For this reason, roundworms are most harmful to young animals, who need as much nourishment as possible while they are growing.

Humans may be infected by roundworms. If a human ingests roundworm eggs, the roundworm larvae can migrate throughout the body, causing a condition called visceral larval migrans. Children should never be allowed to play in areas contaminated by roundworm eggs.

Treatment

Roundworm eggs can be detected under the microscope by a fecal flotation test. Since roundworm eggs indicate the presence of adult roundworms, the doctor administers a deworming medicine. Animals that are severely infested should be rechecked and/or dewormed again in several weeks.

Prevention

Early detection is important. When infestation occurs, owners must pick up all stool in the yard regularly to prevent the animal from reinfesting itself. Oral medication is available for control of roundworms and is included in many heartworm preventions.