

## Tapeworms

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***

Tapeworms can infect both dogs and cats and are transmitted by fleas. The flea is the parasite's intermediate host. Control of the intermediate host is extremely important in preventing reinfestation of tapeworms. The adult tapeworm lives in the pet's intestine. It attaches to the wall of the intestine and absorbs protein from the contents of the intestine. This is what we mean by a parasite living at the expense of another living being. Because the tapeworm is taking nutrition from the pet's intestine, the pet is not getting all the nourishment it should.

Tapeworms are one of the few internal parasites that can be seen in the stool by the owner. They look like grains of white rice.

### ***Treatment***

Adult tapeworms can be treated easily and effectively. The medications come in both injectable form (for the doctor to give in the office) and tablet form (for the owner to give at home).

### ***Prevention***

Control of the intermediate host is a must. Fleas should be eradicated. Animals that regularly catch and eat rodents should be checked for tapeworms often.