

Worried about puppy worms?

Although puppy worms are an irritating (and 'yucky'!) part of life when you're a puppy parent, they're actually pretty normal - and there's no need to panic.

In fact, they're so common that most newborn puppies have roundworms which have been transmitted to them from their momma.

The other types of worms most often seen in dogs include tapeworms, whipworms, hookworms and heartworms.

The bad news is that if left untreated, a minor 'dog worm problem' can turn into an infestation which can cause serious health problems. However.....

The good news is..... it's generally simple to treat puppy worms. And with the help of this user-friendly guide, you should be able to get (and keep) your little Fido worm-free!

The Facts About Puppy Worms

Worms are parasites that set up shop inside your precious puppy. The most common worms found in puppies are roundworms, followed by tapeworms, whipworms, hookworms and heartworms.

Intestinal worms are parasites that steal all the nutrition that should be going to your puppy. They also multiply and grow rapidly, and a few puppy worms can turn into quite an army in a pretty short space of time.

If little Fido has worms which are left untreated he can get quite sick, and will probably look and feel like it too. Luckily prevention and treatment are fairly straightforward and, in a healthy puppy, very effective.

Dog worm medication is most effective when given, or prescribed by your veterinarian. Over the counter dog worm medications that you can buy in your local store are often ineffective at best, and they can even have unwanted side effects.

If you bought your puppy from a responsible breeder they will most likely have started their puppies on a schedule of de-worming several weeks before they go to their new families.

- **Roundworms**

These are the most common type of dog worms and are often transmitted from mother to puppy.

In puppies, symptoms of a roundworm problem can include a thin, scrawny (or skinny) appearance, often the puppy also has a round, distended tummy. A dull, coarse and out-of-condition coat is another sign.

The roundworms can generally be easily seen in your puppies' stools, and if he has a lot of roundworms he may even vomit, cough or have frequent diarrheal.... sometimes even coughing up worms. Not nice!

They're then transmitted through the puppies faeces and if proper hygiene isn't followed it's possible that these parasites could be to transmitted to human members of your family.

Children are especially susceptible to this as they're not known for their effective hand washing technique! Make sure that your family always washes their hands after playing with, or handling, Fido.

Your veterinarian will most likely do a faecal exam (test Fido's poop to see if he has worms) and then administer the appropriate medicine. Although you can buy over-the-counter worm medicines, it's not advisable to treat your puppy yourself.

Leave that kind of stuff to the professionals!

- **Tapeworms**

The most common type of tapeworm is spread by fleas. The worms are then shed in the puppy's faeces... these are usually in segments which look a lot like single grains of white rice.

If you check Fido's poop you will most likely be able to tell whether or not he has tapeworms. However, the definitive test needs to be done at your veterinarian's office, where they can prescribe the right medication to fix the problem.

The most common tapeworms are not easily transmitted, or dangerous to, people. But there *is* a variety that can cause serious health problems and even death in humans so again, good hygiene is a MUST.

Treating your puppy with an effective topical flea preventative is very effective in protecting both your puppy, and your family, from this type of puppy worms.

- **Whipworms**

These particular worms in dogs are more common than most people think, perhaps because they're generally difficult to detect. Fido is at risk of catching whipworms if he eats something that's been in contact with contaminated soil or faeces.

Your veterinarian can make a diagnosis and give the appropriate treatment, which needs to be repeated at specific intervals in order to get rid of all the worms at different stages of development.

- **Hookworms**

There are four kinds of hookworm and unfortunately the most common one (which prefers a warm climate) is the most dangerous. Transmitted through faeces, the hookworm thrives in warm soil and is contracted when the larvae penetrates the skin of its host (aka your puppy/dog!).

Humans can also contract hookworm so it's best not to walk barefoot in the yard or parks where dogs eliminate.

Hookworms can be fatal in young puppies and can cause severe anaemia due to internal blood loss, diarrhoea or pneumonia in older pups. Your veterinarian is the best person to diagnose and treat this parasitic infection.

- **Heartworms**

Of all puppy worms, this is the most dangerous. As its name suggests it isn't an intestinal worm, but one that attacks the heart.... and it's always serious, and often fatal.

Heartworms are transmitted by mosquitoes. As it isn't easy to detect in the early stages, regular tests by your veterinarian (often yearly) for these parasites are recommended.

Treatment for heartworm is long, complicated and expensive so this is definitely a case where prevention is WAY BETTER than cure.

I personally believe in giving your puppy a monthly, preventative medication but you should **always** check with your own veterinarian before giving your puppy any kind of medication.

Using a monthly flea and tick control medication such as Frontline Plus or Advantix can help to prevent or eliminate external parasites. This has a direct and beneficial effect in reducing the chances of poor Fido getting puppy worms, as he isn't being bitten by, or ingesting, fleas.

After De-Worming...

Some puppies may have a mild reaction to the de-worming medications. Symptoms can include tummy upset, diarrhoea, vomiting, loss of appetite or feeling extra tired.

This type of reaction is similar to a mild reaction to vaccinations and is generally nothing to worry about. Most pups who have been treated for puppy worms feel better within 12 - 24 hours.

You may also notice that your pup passes worms in their stool, or occasionally they will vomit them up. This shows the medication is working and again isn't usually cause for concern.

However, if your pup vomits or has diarrhoea repeatedly, excretes a large number of worms, or seems to be feeling really unwell (rather than just a bit 'under the weather'), do call your veterinarian for advice.

It's always better to be safe than sorry with young puppies, so if you're at all worried, check with your vet... and remember, although your pup may experience a mild reaction, it's still vital that he be treated for puppy worms, as the health risks of the worms are far, far more serious!