

What worms are contagious to people?

Many common pet ailments cannot be transmitted to people. Those that can be are called "zoonotic". Unfortunately, two of the most common intestinal worms are zoonotic and can cause significant problems for humans, especially children.

Roundworms or Toxocarasis:

Puppies and kittens catch this worm from their moms, from contaminated soil, or from eating bugs and wildlife. The worm eggs are then shed in your pet's poop. Eggs in fresh poop are not contagious to people but they become very harmful once they have been sitting in the soil, sandbox, beach or playground. If fingers touch contaminated soil and then go in a person's mouth, the eggs can hatch inside the body. The eggs release larvae (baby worms). As the larvae migrate, they cause a severe illness called "Visceral Larval Migrants". The worms generally migrate through the internal organs, causing damage as they go. They have a tendency to find the brain and eyes, causing permanent damage and blindness. Roundworm infection is an important cause of acquired blindness in children.

Hookworms or Ancylostomiasis:

Similar to roundworms, this worm can also be spread by the pet's mom, the environment or wildlife ingestion. Even worse, the larvae of this worm can also go straight through a pet's - or a human's - skin to cause infection. It is quite common for people to walk on contaminated soil or sand with bare feet and get an infection called "Cutaneous Larval Migrants." The condition causes a very itchy rash everywhere that larvae have migrated. It's treatable, but no fun!

Prevention

For the good of both your pets and your loved ones, it is important to prevent the spread of parasites. Here are a few essential tips:

- Follow your veterinarian's recommendations for routine parasite prevention so the eggs do not get shed into the environment. Monthly heartworm preventatives are very important. Cats that go outside often test positive for worms since they hunt, so they need to always get a monthly preventative as prescribed by their veterinarian.
- Keep your dog on a leash and pick up poop promptly to decrease environmental contamination.
- Sandboxes should be covered when not in use so they do not become an outdoor litter box for cats.
- Pets should be kept off of playgrounds and restricted beach areas.
- Children should be taught to wash their hands after touching a pet or playing outside.
- Restrict your pet's access to house plants since up to 20% of potting soil is contaminated with parasite eggs.

For more information visit www.capcvet.org.

Ice Melt Warning

Did you know that products intended to remove or prevent ice from your walkways can be hazardous to your pet's health? Here's what the ASPCA has to say:

"Ice melt contains calcium chloride, which has the potential to be corrosive. It may cause severe skin and gastrointestinal tract irritation, depending on the concentration and circumstances of exposure. Because of this, if you plan to use this ice melt on your property, take care not to apply it thickly-and wipe your dog's paws off thoroughly if he or she steps on any of the crystals or pellets.

As an extra note, keep a look out for ice melt products that are labeled as "pet safe." You may wish to consider these as a relatively safer alternative.