

How to protect pets from parasites:

Essential hygiene measures



Review parasite control in pets at least every 12 months as part of an annual health check.



Advise the client to cover sandpits when not in use.



Stress the importance of thoroughly washing all fruit and vegetables before eating.



Encourage hand hygiene, especially in children.



Advise the client against feeding unprocessed raw meat diets to pets and encourage the provision of fresh water.



Advise the client to pick up faeces immediately from gardens and when dog walking and to wash their hands afterwards. Stress that dog and cat waste should not be composted if compost is intended for edible crops.



Protecting pets from endoparasites

- To maintain individual health and to prevent environmental contamination with *Toxocara* eggs, **treat puppies and kittens for roundworm every 14 days until 14 days post weaning**. Start treatment at 14 days for puppies and 21 days for kittens and treat the mother at the same time.
- **Deworm adult cats and dogs at least 4 times a year to reduce intestinal roundworm egg shedding** (including *Toxocara* spp.) This may be increased to monthly treatments if young children or immune-suppressed individuals are in the household. In countries or regions where routine treatments are not acceptable for legislative reasons, an alternative would be to perform regular faecal examinations followed by anthelmintic treatment if results are positive.
- In areas endemic for *Echinococcus granulosus*, treat dogs with access to offal or livestock carcasses with a product effective against this parasite **at least every 6 weeks**.
- In areas endemic for *Echinococcus multilocularis*, treat dogs that may hunt and eat small prey with a product effective against this parasite **monthly**.
- In **heartworm** endemic countries, ensure that cats, dogs and ferrets are given **seasonal preventative heartworm medication** according to the local epidemiological situation. Treat dogs in areas endemic for heartworm infection annually and test all pets before giving heartworm preventive medication.
- Routine treatment for worms and lungworm prevention both depend upon legislation in individual countries, veterinary professionals taking local epidemiological circumstances into account, owner perception (such as a desire for a “zero risk” approach) and individual risk assessments (hunting pets, previous lungworm exposure, raw meat diets etc). Deworming practices should therefore always be on the advice of a veterinary professional.



Protecting pets from ectoparasites

- **Flea infestation** is an all-year-round risk for pets and exposure is difficult to avoid. The decision to use flea preventative products should depend upon a risk-based assessment. Make owners aware that if routine prophylaxis is not used and infestation established, fleas will take at least 3 months to eliminate. Prophylactic treatment should be used in conjunction with environmental control.
- Suggest **tick prevention** for cats and dogs at significant risk. This risk will be greater during the tick season but exposure for high-risk cats and dogs may occur throughout the year in some countries.
- In canine *Leishmania* species endemic areas, treat dogs monthly with sand fly repellent products. For cats, carry out a lifestyle risk assessment to determine whether they also need a repellent.

Protecting the health of pets, enhancing the safety of the public and preserving the human–animal bond