

Waterloo West Animal Hospital

414 Erb Street West, Waterloo, ON

519-747-2020

Perfect Pests Adapted to Our Pets

Many owners are lulled into a false sense of security because they don't see visible signs of **fleas** on their pets. They may think that they can afford to forego preventive treatment. However, fleas are good at hiding in your pet's hair coat and in the environment. Their bodies sleek and thin, are extremely well adapted for scurrying and disappearing in dense fur, especially near the ears, tail, head, and groin. When infestations are mild or emerging, many owners may think that their pet's itching or scratching is part of its normal grooming behaviour. Cats, in particular, being the fastidious groomers that they are, are very good at grooming fleas off of themselves. That, however, doesn't stop new **fleas** from jumping on them. **Fleas** are well adapted to survive a broad range of environmental conditions and are very capable of surviving indoors year-round, even during winter. **Adult fleas** represent only 5% of the **flea** population. The other 95% are lurking in various immature stages in your pet's immediate environment — in bedding or carpeting or hiding in hard-to-reach crevices. While **flea pupae** normally hatch in about two weeks, they can exist in a suspended state for weeks or even months when environmental conditions aren't just right. This dormancy period means that you may have a continually emerging source of new adult **fleas** for up to several months, even after you have started treatment. In addition, **fleas** are ubiquitous in the environment, and it is easy for pets to pick them up while outside. **Fleas** can be carried into your yard and even into your home by local wildlife, such as raccoons and mice.

Ticks are such small insects, but they can pose a very great danger to us and our companion animals. They prey on the blood of dogs, horses, deer, birds, rodents, and people. There are hundreds of kinds of **ticks**, including the dog tick and the deer tick. Diseases that ticks can transmit to companion animals include Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, ehrlichiosis (a bacterial infection), and babesiosis (a blood disorder). **Ticks** live in cracks and crevices in the home or outside in vegetation, such as grassy meadows, woods, brush, and weeds. They cannot fly or jump, but they have a way of finding a host. Oftentimes, they will wait in wooded or grassed areas and attach themselves to any living creature that brushes them. **Ticks** can also detect the carbon dioxide given off by warm-blooded animals. They can crawl several feet to the carbon dioxide source. Dog owners should inspect their dogs regularly for **ticks**, especially after trips outside to the woods or deer areas. By thoroughly combing your dog within four to six hours of exposure to **tick-infested areas**, you can help **prevent ticks** from attaching to your dog. **Tick** repellents that are available to help ward off **tick** infestation. When numerous **ticks** are found, contact your veterinarian for advice on insecticidal bathing or dipping. Do not handle the ticks with your bare skin as we are susceptible to many of the tick transmitted diseases and they may choose to bite you instead!

Mange is a year-round skin disease caused by an infestation of **Sarcoptic** mange mites. These little pests burrow into your dog's skin and secrete substances (allergens) that cause allergic reactions and intense itching and irritation, which may lead to a lot of hair loss and skin infections. **Mange** is highly contagious: dogs can easily catch it from other dogs they come in contact with in shelters, in kennels, at the groomer, out on walks in fields or in other situations. Many heartworm preventative medications are licensed to prevent **Sarcoptic** mange as well. Remember this **Mange** is a zoonosis and can cause a rash that will result in small raised bumps on the surface of the body in humans

Another parasite to watch for is the **ear mite**. Lots of pet owners are familiar with **ear mites**. If you notice your pet scratching his ear intensely or biting himself, he could have **ear mites**. These pests also leave a brown or black crust on the outer ear.

Ask Us How We Can Help You Prevent and Protect your Pets and Family!

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Internal Parasites Our Pets need Protection!

The most common internal parasites are tapeworms, hookworms, whipworms, and roundworms.

Tapeworms can be passed onto your pet through fleas, which sometimes carry this parasite in its larval stage. Outside pets also can get them by eating infected rodents. If you find your pet is constantly licking his anal area, your best bet is to visually inspect the area and his stool for bits of tapeworm, which look like rice. These parasites can affect your pet's ability to absorb nutrients, and without treatment, they can potentially damage the lining of the intestinal tract. How can you protect your family and pet from these common parasites? Most of the heartworm preventatives also have deworming medication for the most common of these parasites. If your children enjoy playing in the sandbox, remember that the neighbourhood cat might, too. If the sandbox has become his litter box, your children run the risk of contracting roundworms through fecal-oral transmission. Children are more prone to roundworm, but avid or amateur gardeners also need to beware. That neighbourhood cat may be using your garden for his litter box as well. The best preventatives are to cover up the sandbox, wear gloves when gardening, and constantly wash your hands after being outside.

Another common parasite is Giardia. It is a diarrheal illness caused by a microscopic parasite, *Giardia intestinalis* (also known as *Giardia lamblia* or *Giardia duodenalis*). Once a person or animal has been infected with *Giardia*, the parasite lives in the intestine and is passed in feces. Because the parasite is protected by an outer shell, it can survive outside the body and in the environment for long periods of time (i.e., months). During the past 2 decades, *Giardia* infection has become recognized as a **common cause of waterborne disease in humans** in North America. *Giardia* can be found worldwide. The *Giardia* parasite lives in the intestine of infected humans or animals (e.g., cats, dogs, cattle, deer, and beavers). Millions of germs can be released in a bowel movement of an infected human or animal. *Giardia* is found on surfaces or in soil, food, or water that has been contaminated with the feces from infected humans or animals. You **can** become infected after accidentally swallowing the parasite; you **cannot** become infected through contact with blood.

Next frequently found parasite is Coccidia. These are microscopic parasites that commonly infect the intestines of dogs and cats. Although most often, *Isospora canis* and *Isospora felis* forms of the parasite infect dogs and cats, respectively, *Cryptosporidium* and *Toxoplasma* forms of **coccidia** may also infect these and other animals. In addition, these less commonly found parasites are **zoonotic**, meaning that they can be transmitted to humans. **Transmission of coccidia** begins when the immature coccidia, or oocysts, are passed in the feces from an infected dog or cat into the environment, where they can mature and be ingested by another animal. Transmission also can occur when a dog or cat eats an animal such as a rodent that has been infected with the *Isospora* parasite. Animals that are affected by a coccidia infection may experience intestinal problems such as watery diarrhoea that can be severe, vomiting and dehydration. Death may result in severe cases. However, antibiotics have been successful at decreasing the presence of the parasites and restoring the animal's health.

There are many other types of parasites that our furry friends can contract but for more information on the current ones previously mentioned and more visit www.capcvet.org .