

What are Parasites?

Parasites are organisms that live either in or on other organisms (hosts) and benefit at the host's expense, often causing harm to the host, by deriving nutrients and reproducing.

Hosts can be any animal including humans, but in this case we will just be looking at parasites of dogs and cats.

Commonly known parasites include worms and fleas, however, there are a lot more to parasites than that! Parasites belong to one of two groups: ectoparasites (external parasites) and endoparasites (internal parasites). Each parasite group is split up further into different types, namely:

Endoparasites: Worms, Protozoa

Ectoparasites: Fleas, Flies, Lice, Ticks, Mites

These parasite types are then categorised into further sub-groups and species.

The information provided on this website will help you to understand more about these different parasites and the health threats that they pose to your pet and your family, and advise you on the best methods of parasite prevention and control.

What action can you take to reduce the risk of infection?

You should consult your vet or SQP (Suitably Qualified Person) and plan your pet's parasite treatment and prevention plan, which should be based on the ESCCAP guidelines. By discussing the right topics with your vet or Suitably Qualified Person (SQP) he/she will be able to recommend the most appropriate parasite treatment and advise how to keep your pet's healthcare up-to-date. Please note, to keep your pet and household parasite free you will need to spend time and money. By doing this you certainly will help to minimise the risks to your pet and family whether at home or abroad. If every owner takes responsibility for protecting their pet and family, parasites will no longer pose such a major health and welfare issue and we can move one step closer to a parasite-free world.



Top tips to protect your pet and family!

- Wash your hands after stroking your pet because a pet's coat may contain worm eggs
- Avoid facial contact with your pet and never kiss your pet
- Wash your hands after any exposure to soil (gardening), sandpits, raw meat and litter trays
- Clean out litter trays daily (and get someone else to do this for you if you are pregnant)
- Supervise infants on the floor – don't allow them to eat dirt or food that has fallen on the floor or the ground
- Dispose of animal faeces safely and considerately so they are not contaminating the environment
- Cover sandpits and play areas to prevent wildlife and strays from contaminating these areas
- Take your pet to the vet and discuss your pet's lifestyle to ensure effective parasite protection all year round

Topics to discuss with your vet:

- The age of your pet – whether old or young, your pet needs protecting against parasites at every stage of its life
- The environment in which your pet lives – does your dog live in a kennel, spend lots of time outdoors, cohabit with other dogs or cats in your home? Similarly, does your cat live in the home, does it ever go outside, visit other households, stay in a cattery, have contact with stray or feral cats or live with other pets in your home?
- Nutrition – is your pet prone to hunting or scavenging? Unfortunately, pets that hunt or scavenge from carcasses could increase their risk of parasite infection
- Location and travel – do you travel within the country or abroad with your pet?