

## **What are intestinal parasites and why should you care?**

Guelph, ON - Intestinal parasites, often referred to as worms, are found in all mammals, including cats, dogs and even people. Intestinal parasites are designed to survive inside the intestines, depending on their host, to provide them with food and a place to live. Some intestinal parasites feed off the host's blood and will bite or attach to the intestinal lining. Others simply live inside the gut, feeding off whatever the host is eating. Pets get worms from some common behaviours such as eating wildlife, or even fleas, and drinking from puddles. They can also get infected from less obvious sources such as licking parasite-laden dew found on their feet, microscopic parasite eggs on toys and sticks they put in their mouths or eating insects like houseflies.

Some intestinal parasites can be spread between people and pets. In pets, parasites generally limit themselves to the intestinal tract and cause symptoms like diarrhea and discomfort. In people, these parasites don't know how to behave and often end up in dangerous places such as eyes and brains.

### **Common Intestinal Parasites**

**Roundworms:** Roundworms can infect puppies even before birth. They live in the gastrointestinal tract, taking nutrition from the intestinal contents and causing discomfort. Roundworms can be spread to people.

**Tapeworms:** Pets can get tapeworms from eating fleas, wildlife and infected eggs from the environment. Tapeworms attach to the intestine and shed segments that can be seen as small white pieces around the tail of infected pets.

**Hookworms:** Hookworms attach to the intestinal wall and can cause bleeding and pain. In severe cases, puppies and kittens can lose enough blood to be dangerous. Hookworms can penetrate the skin of humans and pets.

*Giardia:* Although both people and pets can get *Giardia*, they generally each have their own kind of *Giardia*. People and pets can both be infected through contaminated water and usually experience severe diarrhea.

Every pet owner should discuss their pet's lifestyle and parasite risks with their veterinary health care team so that a personalized deworming program can be created to protect the pet and its family. While the thought of parasites in your pet can be unpleasant, your veterinary health care team can help with solutions to keep pets and people happy and healthy.

### **Contact:**

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Photo caption: Adult hookworm. © Bayer Inc.



Photo caption: Roundworm larvae hatching from egg. © Bayer Inc.

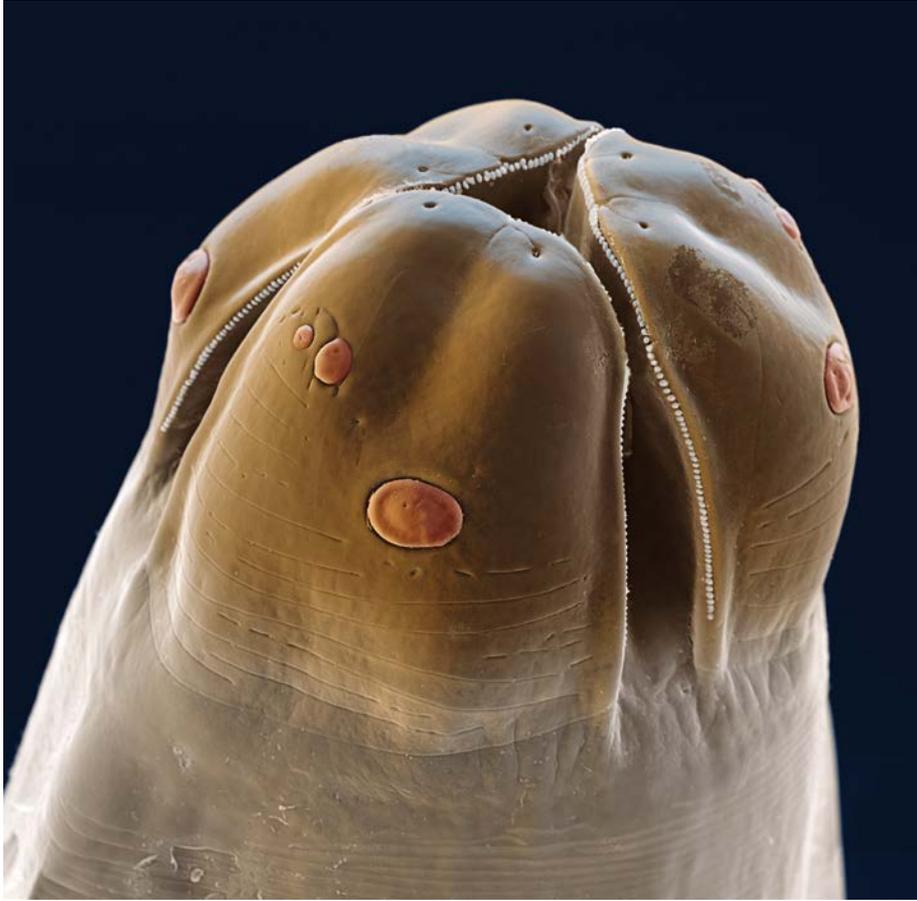


Photo caption: Adult roundworm. © Bayer Inc.