



## The Flea “Pyramid”

The adult fleas you may see on your pet account for only 5% of the likely flea population in your home. Flea eggs, flea larvae and pupae add up to all the rest. Infestations can build quickly because a female flea lays up to 50 eggs a day. Just 10 female fleas can produce up to 3,500 eggs a week! Multiply that by the fact that a flea can live on a pet for months, and you can see why it's important to prevent fleas before they ever appear

## The Flea Lifecycle

Good flea control starts with understanding the flea lifecycle. Fleas lay eggs that fall off pets anywhere they go (they may look like grains of sand). The eggs hatch into tiny larval stages that look like small white maggots with black heads. These do not feed on animals, but instead live in upholstery, bedding and carpets, feeding on organic debris (for example skin scurf and flea ‘dirt’ ). When they are ready, the larvae form pupae, and inside they form the adult flea.

Fleas will not emerge from the pupae in an empty house. Vibration, warmth and carbon dioxide exhaled by mammals tell the fleas that a host is near and they emerge in seconds: this is the reason for tales of carpets seething with fleas when a family returns from a holiday or moves into a house that has been empty for a while. Pets should only be given flea treatment that has been recommended for them by the vet. Products suitable for one species may not be suitable for another. Products available from supermarkets and pet shops may not be 100% effective against flea infestation. If an infestation is severe, both pet and home must be treated.

## Worming

Regular worming is important to maintain the health of pets and family as worms can be transmitted to people.

Cats and dogs may appear to be worm free, but can still be carrying worms. Often it's only when a severe infection is present that worms can be seen passing in their faeces. The British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) recommends worming every 3 months for this reason.

## Types of worms

Roundworms live in an animal's gut, living off the contents in the intestines. They can grow up to 180mm long in dogs, and 100mm in cats. Virtually every puppy and kitten is born with roundworms, or become infected whilst nursing. Roundworms are 'zoonotic', meaning they can be transmitted to humans. The roundworm life cycle is around 30 days, which is why we advise to worm puppies and kittens monthly as they are more vulnerable.

Tapeworms also affect both dogs and cats. They attached themselves to the gut wall and can grow up to 5 metres long. Tapeworms cannot be passed directly from one pet to another, but are transmitted by an 'intermediate' host, such as a flea. The tapeworm larvae are carried by fleas, which are often then swallowed by a cat or dog whilst grooming. Once ingested, the larvae develop into adult worms in the gut (in about 3 weeks), and then begin to shed their eggs. These can be seen in faeces or around an animal's bottom, and look like small rice segments. The eggs that are shed are then eaten by flea larvae that live in pet bedding or carpets, and the cycle begins again.

Hookworms are much smaller, and infect dogs, cats and occasionally humans. They can be picked up by walking on contaminated soil, where the larvae burrow into the skin. Although rare in the UK, it is more prevalent on the continent.

Whipworms only infect dogs, and is rare in the UK as well. It's usually found in areas where lots of dogs are cohabitate, such as kennels. Whipworm is spread by dogs ingesting the infected faeces from other dogs.

Lungworms only infect dogs, and are carried by slugs and snails. These must be ingested to infect a dog. Lungworms can affect the respiratory system, so noticeable signs may include a cough or breathing difficulties. They can't be transmitted to humans, but can be deadly for dogs.

All these worms can affect a pet's health, and whilst it's difficult to prevent infection, worming pets regularly will prevent them from causing problems. Vets can provide a wormer that will kill every type of intestinal worm that pets can pick up in the UK.

## Lanes Vets Locations & Contact Information.

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