



Roundworms

Diagnostic Plan

History
Physical examination
Stool analysis

Therapeutic Plan

Dewormers
Supportive therapy

Nutritional Plan

Nutrition based on individual patient evaluation including body condition and other organ system involvement or disease

Roundworms

Your pet has roundworms. Roundworms are the most common intestinal parasite seen in most veterinary practices. Signs of roundworm infection include an unhealthy appearance, diarrhea, vomiting, and a distended abdomen (a pot-belly). These signs are most severe in puppies and kittens, and can be life-threatening. Dewormers are extremely effective for treating roundworm infections. This client education sheet will help you learn more about roundworms and will review your veterinarian's instructions for your pet's care at home, as well as follow-up with the veterinary health care team.

What You Should Know About Roundworms

Roundworms, or ascarids, are white parasites one inch or more in length that live in the small intestines of dogs and cats. Mature female roundworms lay eggs that are passed in the pet's stool. Under the proper conditions of humidity and temperature, these eggs mature in the kennel or yard and become infective to other animals. Roundworm eggs are extremely resistant to adverse conditions and may contaminate the environment for years.

Pets acquire roundworm infections in several ways. Cats, especially, may ingest eggs when they groom themselves after spending time in the yard or near contaminated litter pans. And both dogs and cats may acquire roundworms by eating insects and animals that have been infected with immature roundworms called larvae. Such animals include rodents, rabbits, birds, and some farm animals.

Many experts believe that the most significant route of roundworm is from mother to offspring. In dogs, roundworm larvae cross the placenta and infect puppies before they are born. Roundworm larvae in both dogs and cats can be transmitted to puppies and kittens through the mother's milk.

People can be infected with roundworm larvae. This infection, called visceral larva migrans, occurs most commonly in children who eat dirt contaminated with roundworm eggs.

Diagnosis

Many authorities believe that all or most puppies and kittens acquire roundworm infections from their mothers. A young animal, therefore, with no deworming history is likely to be infected with roundworms. Roundworm infections are usually diagnosed when your veterinarian finds eggs during microscopic examination of a pet's stool. Several stool samples may need to be examined to establish a diagnosis. Mature worms may be found in vomitus or stool samples.

Treatment and Home Care

Dewormers effectively remove roundworms from dogs and cats. But additional therapy such as antibiotics, fluid therapy, and intestinal protectants may be needed.

Control of roundworms should be aimed at reducing the number of infective eggs in the pet's environment. Dogs and cats with roundworms should be dewormed as needed. Feces should be removed daily from litter pans and exercise areas, such as yards and kennels. Litter pans should be washed routinely and allowed to dry in direct sunlight.

Because dogs and cats acquire roundworm infection by eating insects and other animals, scavenging and hunting behaviors should be controlled as much as possible.

Regular microscopic examination of your pet's stool is the best method to ensure that your pet has not been reinfected with roundworms. Your veterinarian will tell you how often your pet's stool should be examined.

Nutritional Plan

If your pet has roundworms, your veterinarian may suggest a dietary change based on your pet's age and body condition, the degree of illness caused by roundworms, and the presence or absence of disease in other organs and body systems. If your pet is severely ill with roundworms, your veterinarian may give you special feeding instructions. Debilitated patients may benefit from foods with increased levels of protein and energy during the recovery process. Such foods include Hill's® Prescription Diet® Canine p/d® and Feline p/d®.

After your pet's recovery is complete, your veterinarian may recommend another dietary change. Nutrition is especially important for maximum growth and proper development of the immune, or protective, system in puppies and kittens, such as those presented with roundworms. Optimal nutrition should also reduce the health risks associated with feeding excess levels of nutrients such as calcium and phosphorus, which could cause skeletal problems, and excess calories, which could cause obesity. Foods formulated for maximum growth that avoid excess levels of harmful nutrients include Hill's® Science Diet® Puppy and Kitten.

Transitioning Food

Unless recommended otherwise by your veterinarian, gradually introduce any new food over a seven-day period. Mix the new food with your pet's former food, gradually increasing its proportion until only the new food is fed.

If your pet is one of the few that doesn't readily accept a new food, try warming the canned food to body temperature, hand feeding for the first few days, or mixing the dry food with warm water (wait ten minutes before serving). However, do not add water to your cat's food. Feed only the recommended food. Be patient but firm with your pet.

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Home Care Instructions

Client's Name: _____

Patient's Name: _____

Medication(s): _____

Nutritional Recommendation: _____

Follow-Up Appointment: _____

(Hospital Stamp Area Above)

REGULAR VISITS WILL HELP OUR VETERINARY HEALTH CARE TEAM PROVIDE FOR YOUR PET'S BEST INTEREST.