

The Facts about Toxocara

www.pethealthcouncil.co.uk

Regular worming can prevent Toxocara in cats and dogs.

Toxocara is a common roundworm found in dogs and cats which can be easily and cheaply treated by regular worming. Human infection (toxocariasis) may occur if mature Toxocara eggs are swallowed.

However, it is very rare for anyone to become ill as a result of infection.

WHAT IS TOXOCARA?

Toxocara canis is the common roundworm of the dog. Toxocara eggs are passed in the faeces of infected dogs, sometimes contaminating children's hands as they play. If infective eggs are then swallowed, there is a slight possibility of an illness referred to as toxocariasis.



HOW COMMON IS TOXOCARIASIS?

Toxocariasis is very rare – there are approximately two cases of illness due to infection per million of the population a year. On the rare occasions when human infection occurs, it usually only causes mild, flu-like symptoms. Toxocara antibodies are present in fewer than 2 in 100 healthy adults in the UK, who have previously been exposed to infection with no ill effects.

CAN TOXOCARIASIS CAUSE BLINDNESS?

Total blindness from Toxocara infection is exceptional. It is rare even for the sight of one eye to be totally lost, though vision can be impaired. Of course, just one case is one too many, but regular worming of dogs and cats will prevent the possibility of infection.

ARE ALL DOG FAECES INFECTED WITH TOXOCARIASIS?

Freshly passed faeces are not a Toxocara hazard. Any eggs present in the faeces take two or three weeks to mature and require very specific environmental conditions before becoming infectious.



WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT ANYONE CATCHING TOXOCARIASIS?

Toxocariasis is easily preventable. If you're a dog owner, make sure that you worm your dog regularly. A better alternative is to train a dog

at an early stage to 'go' on command, at home. Whatever the situation always clear up after your dog with a 'poop-scoop' and dispose of the faeces properly. Children should be reminded to wash their hands after stroking a pet, before eating and especially if they've been playing outside.

I'VE MOVED TO A NEW HOUSE WHERE THE PREVIOUS OWNER HAD A DOG. CAN I TREAT THE GARDEN TO KILL ANY REMAINING TOXOCARA EGGS?

Most responsible pet owners do worm regularly so there shouldn't be any problem. However, simple hygiene measures should always be taken, for example, wearing gloves whilst gardening and teaching children to wash their hands after playing, before eating and if their hands are dirty. Many normal gardening activities will greatly lessen the chance of significant contamination i.e. by digging and turning the earth and the composting of grass clippings and other vegetable matter.

In situations where contamination of soil has occurred, some eggs may remain infective for up to three years; the simple hygiene measures above should be followed to avoid potential risk.

I'VE NOTICED MY DOG HAS WORMS AND HAS RECENTLY BEEN SEEN RUBBING HIS REAR ON THE CARPETS AND I AM WORRIED ABOUT EXPOSING MY FAMILY TO INFECTION – WHAT SHOULD I DO?

The Toxocara eggs require very specific weather and environmental conditions to mature and are unlikely to survive on carpets and other flooring materials. Contact your vet to check that your diagnosis of worms is accurate and your dog is not suffering from another complaint which is making him rub his rear on the carpets.

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I THINK MY CHILD MAY HAVE EATEN SOME DOG FAECES – WHAT SHOULD I DO?

There is very little risk of Toxocara infection. However, you are advised to take your child along to your doctor for advice and any appropriate treatment.

CAN YOU CATCH TOXOCARIASIS FROM A CAT?

There is no evidence of anyone catching toxocariasis resulting from the round worm of the cat. As a matter of routine, cats should be wormed regularly. Proper hygienic handling of cat litter trays is important.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I WORM MY DOG/PUPPY?

It is important to worm dogs routinely, at least every six months. It is also very important to worm pregnant or nursing bitches and especially young puppies which are more likely to be

handled by young children. Bitches should be wormed before mating, after the first 45 days of pregnancy, after giving birth and whilst weaning pups. Puppies should be wormed at about two weeks of age and at regular intervals (at least four times) until six months of age.

Seek the advice of a health professional if you are in any doubt about the advisability of worming, the age that worming should be carried out and the dosages involved. As with any treatment read the product label carefully.

Remember a healthy pet is a happy pet and a happy pet means a happy owner!

The Pet Health Council was formed in 1979 with the specific aim of promoting the health and welfare of pet animals in the interests of both pets and people. The PHC works with medical and veterinary advisers who are experts in this field.

The leaflet range currently comprises the following:

Insuring your Pet	Pets and The Family
Choosing a Pet	Your Pet's Teeth
Fit Not Fat	Practical Steps for Healthy Pets
Getting a Puppy	Stressed Pets
Health Benefits of Pets	The Facts about Toxocara
International Pet Travel	The Facts about Toxoplasmosis
Nutrition for Cats and Dogs	Worm Your Dog
Pets and Allergies	Your First Pet

Download leaflets from the PHC website:
www.pethealthcouncil.co.uk

The Pet Health Council 
working for healthy pets & people

The Five Golden Rules to Successful Pet Ownership

1. Follow a preventive health programme for your pet that includes:
 - a good diet
 - regular exercise
 - worming
 - vaccination
 - annual veterinary check ups
 - health insurance
2. Observe basic hygiene practices around your pet
3. Respect your pet, you have a duty of care, to fulfil your pet's basic needs including privacy and space as well as love and attention
4. Be a responsible owner, clear up after your animal and be considerate of other people and animals
5. Consider the changing needs of your pet throughout his life.

Associated organisations of the Pet Health Council include:

Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Animal Therapy, Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors, British Small Animal Veterinary Association, British Veterinary Association, National Office of Animal Health, National Pharmacy Association, Pet Food Manufacturers' Association, Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain and Society for Companion Animal Studies.



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