



Holistic Care –by Rita Hogan

Preventing And Treating Worms In Dogs

Would you know if your dog had worms?

There are several types of intestinal worms your dog can get, and different types of worms can affect your dog in different ways.

The good news is, there are natural, safe ways to get rid of worms, without resorting to chemical dewormers like Panacur.

But before you think about deworming your dog, you should probably know the signs of worm problems.

Signs of Worms

Some worms cause more obvious symptoms than others. I've provided more specific symptom information below along with information about the different types of worms (See *Types of Worms below*) ...

... but here are a few clues your dog may give you that could mean he has worms.

Intermittent or frequent diarrhea or vomiting can be signs your dog has worms.

Your dog may have a fever.

He may scoot and lick his rear (though scooting can mean other things too).

Your dog may be off his food or be a little lethargic; his coat may look dull.

You might see stools that are coated in mucus (but otherwise look normal).

Or you might see squiggly worms or "rice bodies" in his stool.

But some worms can't be seen with the naked eye, so if your dog's showing some of these signs, you might want to get a faecal sample analysed by your vet.

Collecting A Sample

You need to get a fresh sample ... so

don't just go out in your yard and find day old poop.

Go outside with your dog or take him out on a leash to get a fresh sample.

You don't need to take your vet the whole poop. A sample about the size of two or three sugar cubes is usually sufficient for analysis purposes.

You can use a poop bag to "pinch off" a sample and then dispose of the rest of the pile in the usual way.

Place the sample in a clean small plastic container. Old pill bottles are ideal but you should wash them out thoroughly first.

Label the container with your dog's name and your last name and take it to the vet as soon as you can. If you can't go right away, store it in the refrigerator (not the freezer), or outdoors in cooler weather.

Occasionally, because of the life cycle of the worm, false negatives can happen (meaning the test says there are no worms when your dog has them), so if you get a negative result but still see symptoms, it's a good idea to retest.

If your dog tests positive for intestinal worms, you'll want to know which kind of worms he has before deciding how to treat them.

Types of Worms

The most common types of intestinal worms are roundworms, hookworms, whipworms and tapeworms.

Roundworms

Roundworms live and reproduce in the small intestine.

Adult roundworms are one to seven inches long and look like spaghetti.

Roundworms have microscopic eggs so your dog can pick them up in his

environment, or by eating infected animals like birds or rodents.

For most adult dogs roundworms are low risk and don't cause health problems.

But if you have a pregnant female with roundworms, she can transmit them to her puppies during pregnancy; in puppies roundworms can be more serious, causing diarrhea and vomiting, and may result in malnutrition and impaired growth.

If your dog has roundworm, he may look pot bellied, and may be lethargic or weak. He may also have diarrhea or vomiting, show signs of abdominal pain, and a dull coat. Weight loss can mean a more significant infection.

Hookworms

Hookworms also live mainly in the small intestine. They're grey and between ½ and ¾ inch long.

The front end of the worm has a hook that attaches to the intestinal lining, where it feeds on your dog's blood.

Your dog can pick up hookworm larvae from the soil, through his mouth or through the skin on his pads.

Most adult dogs develop some immunity to hookworms, but if your dog is immune compromised he can be more susceptible to infection.

Diarrhea and vomiting are the usual symptoms of hookworm.

Nursing females can transmit hookworm larvae to newborn puppies through milk, which can cause chronic

diarrhea (often with blood or mucus) and anaemia

Signs of anaemia include weakness, depression, lethargy and pale mucous membranes (like the gums).

Whipworms

Whipworms attach to the mucous membranes (mucosa) lining the cecum and colon (both part of the large intestine), where they feed on your dog's blood.

Adult whipworms are two to three inches long, tapered at one end, like a whip – hence the name.

Your dog can get whipworms from swallowing whipworm eggs in soil or water that contain dog feces.

Signs of whipworms are diarrhea, vomiting and weight loss.

Whipworms eggs survive in the environment for a long time so reinfection after treatment is quite common.

Tapeworms

Tapeworms are long, flat worms that attach to the intestines.

If your dog has tapeworms you might see worm segments that look like grains of rice in his poop.

There are about 14 different species of tapeworm. Fleas carry tapeworm eggs so if your dog has fleas, he could get tapeworm.

Tapeworm segments themselves aren't infectious, but your dog can get tapeworms by eating intermediate hosts like fleas and lice, as well as rodents, rabbits or large animals such as sheep, goats, cattle, pigs or deer.

(If you're a raw feeder, freezing meats for 10 days before feeding will eliminate tapeworms.)

If your dog has tapeworms he may not show any signs of illness, but over time his coat may start to look dull and he may lose his appetite or lose a little weight.

Giardia

Giardia lives in the intestine and is a protozoan (a microscopic single celled parasite) with a hair-like tail.

Your dog can pick up giardia by drinking water contaminated with giardia from the feces of infected

animals or humans.

Many dogs don't get any symptoms from giardia, but others may develop chronic, intermittent diarrhea. The signs are usually more severe in puppies.

Coccidia

Coccidia are also protozoans that live in the intestinal walls. Coccidiosis can be quite common in puppies.

In young puppies coccidiosis can cause serious diarrhea and may even cause death from dehydration and malnourishment.

Most adult dogs don't show symptoms but can spread the infection through their faeces, which contaminate the soil.

Avoiding De-Worming Drugs

I've got some great recommendations for foods and herbs that can help prevent and treat worms.

But first I want to emphasize why you shouldn't use deworming drugs, either for prevention or to treat worm infestations in your dog.

There are many different drugs available and, like any drugs, they all have side effects.

And as you'll see, there are many effective natural alternatives you can use, so there's no need to use drugs that can cause side effects and harm your dog.

When you read about some of the adverse effects that have been reported for common de-worming drugs, you'll probably agree it's not worth the risk to your dog.

This is not an exhaustive list, but here are some examples of the adverse drug events reported to

Note that some drugs contain more than one active ingredient.

de-worming products, like Panacur®, Drontal Plus® and Safe-Guard®.

The FDA lists several pages of adverse events for fenbendazole.

The most common are vomiting, depression/lethargy, diarrhea, anorexia, and there are 126 reported deaths. Other side effects listed include itching and facial swelling.

There have also been cases of anaphylaxis resulting from rapid parasite die-off after using fenbendazole.

Pyrantel

This is the active ingredient in Drontal® Plus, PRO-Wormer 2®, Nemex®-2. Side effects include vomiting, depression/lethargy, anorexia and 204 instances of death.

Praziquantel

This is the active ingredient in Droncit®, Drontal® Plus.

Reported adverse events include vomiting, depression/lethargy, diarrhea, anorexia and 13 instances of death.

Combination Drugs

It's also important to note that some drug manufacturers combine de-worming ingredients with heartworm drugs like ivermectin or milbemycin oxime. They then market these combinations as preventives for heartworm plus various kinds of intestinal worms.

So if you used these "preventive" drugs monthly as the manufacturers and many vets recommend, you'd actually be treating your dog unnecessarily for worms he doesn't have! Some of these combination drugs are Panacur® Plus, Heartgard® Plus, Tri-Heart® Plus, Iverhart Max®.

Beware the drugs with "Plus" in their name!

Fenbendazole

This is the active ingredient in some of the most commonly used

Preventing Worms

The starting point for preventing and treating worms (or any other disease) is always a healthy immune system.

A dog with a strong immune system is less likely to be an attractive host for any kind of parasite.

Many dogs get some intestinal worms occasionally, but if your dog is healthy with a strong immune system, they probably won't make him sick.

In this case you may never know he even had the worms because he will probably just expel them naturally, and you won't see any symptoms.

Approximately 80% of the immune system is in the gut, so giving your dog the best diet you can will help keep worms away. Feed your dog a natural, whole foods, preferably raw meat based diet.

Support your dog's overall wellbeing by avoiding pharmaceutical drugs like antibiotics and vaccines as well as pesticides such as flea, tick and heartworm medications.

All these drugs contain toxic ingredients that can harm your dog's organs, causing serious disease and even death.

Keeping your yard free of poop will also help prevent your dog from picking up intestinal worms

Foods To Fight Worms

You can add some of the foods below to your dog's diet to help prevent worms, as well as to help get rid of a worm infestation.

Fruit and Vegetables

Foods like grated raw carrot, watercress, greens, squash, fennel, papaya or pumpkin can help make your dog's intestinal tract less attractive to worms. The orange veggies also provide vitamin A, which can help eliminate roundworms.

Feed any of the above fruits and vegetables you like; give at least ½ tsp of each veggie or fruit per 10 lbs of your dog's body weight, twice daily. Don't overdo the orange veggies or your dog may get

Dried Coconut

Dried coconut is a vermifuge, meaning it can help eliminate tapeworms from the body.

Sprinkle on food, giving 1 tsp for small dogs, 2 tsp for medium dogs and 1 Tbsp for large breeds.

Probiotics and Digestive Enzymes

Probiotics help maintain a good balance of healthy gut bacteria and can strengthen your dog's immune system and help him keep worms at bay.

You can feed foods like kefir or fermented vegetables, or purchase a good probiotic supplement.

Digestive enzymes also provide additional support for your dog's digestive system to help him eliminate parasites.

For both probiotics and digestive enzymes, if you use a product made for dogs, follow the package dosing recommendations. If you use a human product, assume it's for a 150 lb person and adjust according to your dog's weight.

Trace Minerals

Trace minerals are also excellent for balancing the gastrointestinal system.

Add a pinch of trace mineral salt (such as sea salt or Himalayan Pink Salt) with each feeding.

Make sure you buy an authentic sea or Himalayan salt as there are many impostors!

Apple Cider Vinegar

A naturally alkaline system kills parasites.

About ¼ to 1 tsp of apple cider vinegar added to your dog's food or water every day can help keep his system alkaline.

You can test your dog's pH using test strips (available online or at pharmacies).

Hold the strip in your dog's urine stream for 1 to 3 seconds. The ideal pH for your dog is between 6.5 and 7. Since the pH varies throughout the day, it's best to test several times over a 24 hour period and take an average.

Natural Worm Treatments

Here are some of the more common

herbal and other natural treatment options.

Keep in mind that none of these herbs should be overused; don't use more than the recommended amount without consulting with a holistic veterinarian or herbalist.

Caution: With the exception of pumpkin seeds and black seed, none of these remedies should be used during pregnancy or lactation.

Pumpkin Seeds

Raw, organic pumpkin seeds can help prevent or expel worms. You can grind them and place them in your dog's dish. Ground seeds will mix well with ground meat.

Give ¼ teaspoon per ten pounds of your dog's weight.

Pumpkin seeds are safe to use, even during pregnancy.

Black Seed

Black seed or black cumin seed (*nigella sativa*) comes from the mid-east and parts of Africa.

It has been used for centuries by indigenous populations and is known as "the cure for everything except death."

Black seed will get rid of most types of worms and is completely safe.

Depending on the size of your dog, use ½ to 1 teaspoon of black seed in food per day. The seeds can be heated first to eliminate the bitter taste.

Whole seeds are best, but if using black seed oil, halve the above dose.

Garlic

Garlic is safe and is good for your dog when fed in moderation.

Garlic can boost the immune system and help fight worms and giardia.

In fact, a recent scientific study found garlic to be just as effective as the toxic chemical veterinary dewormer, Ivermectin. (Ayaz et al, Recent Pat Antiinfect Drug Discov. 2008 Jun).

Garlic helps rid the stomach wall of mucus and makes it less hospitable for worms. It also contains an amino acid called allicin, which is effective against roundworms and hookworms.

Peel and chop the garlic and allow it to sit at room temperature for a minimum of 15 minutes, which allows the allicin to be released.

Feed in the following amounts:

Small dogs ¼ clove twice a day,
medium dogs ½ clove twice a day,
large dogs ¾ clove twice a day, giant
breeds 1 clove twice a day.

*Caution: don't use garlic if your dog's
taking cyclosporine or blood thinners*

Diatomaceous Earth (DE)

DE can reduce the number of worms in your dog although it may not be as effective for tapeworms.

When using DE for your dog, use food grade, not pool grade DE.

Feed small dogs 1 tsp per day and dogs over 55 pounds up to 1 Tbsp per day.

Make sure it's well mixed in his food as inhaling DE can irritate your dog's lungs.

DE can also be sprinkled sparingly on the skin to prevent fleas and thus tapeworm.

Chamomile

This herb can work to prevent and expel both roundworms and whipworms.

It may not work as quickly as other herbs but it is effective and has anti-inflammatory properties, which calm the intestinal tract when parasites cause discomfort such as bloating, gas or cramps in your dog.

Chamomile is best used as a glycerin tincture.

Give 0.25 to 0.50 ml per 20 lbs of body weight, twice daily.

Give the tincture directly into your dog's mouth or place in his drinking water.

Cloves

Cloves are effective against microscopic parasites such as giardia and coccidia.

Give one clove per 10 lbs of body weight once daily, or a small pinch of

clove powder in food.

Freshly crushed leaves will kill the eggs of parasites.

Caution: Do not give cloves to pregnant females as they can cause miscarriage. Cloves can be highly toxic given in large doses and you should also be careful when using them on small dogs.

Olive Leaf

Olive leaf extract will help flush parasites out of your dog's intestinal tract.

Oleopurin is a unique compound contained in the fruit and leaves of olive trees. The health benefits of olive oil are well known and scientists have found that it's oleopurin that provides these health benefits.

Olive leaves contain high amounts of oleopurin, so olive leaf extract is a very efficient way of giving your dog the health benefits of olive oil without giving him a lot of oil!

Olive leaf extract is sold in different strengths of oleopurin. To treat intestinal worms, look for olive leaf extract containing 12% oleopurin or higher.

Give your dog this olive leaf extract for eight weeks, in the following amounts.

300 mg twice per day for small dogs,
500 mg twice per day for medium
dogs and 1000 mg twice per day for
large dogs.

Neem Leaf

Give neem leaf twice a day for one week to eliminate intestinal parasites (but not tapeworm).

Use 150 mg per day for small dogs, 250 mg for medium dogs and 500 mg for large dogs.

Slippery Elm

Slippery elm is a gentle laxative that can help your dog get worms out of his system. It can also soothe any irritations the worms cause in the digestive tract.

This makes slippery elm a very good supplement to give alongside other treatment options.

Mix the powder into food or some yogurt, 1 tsp per 10 lbs of body weight.

Liver, Kidney and Lymph Support

Any time you're treating worms it's a

good idea to support the liver and kidneys as well as the lymph system, to help move fluids and process worms that are absorbed by the blood.

Giving milk thistle seed at the same time as other treatments can help protect the liver. Milk thistle is best given in a tincture, starting at ¼ tsp per 20 pounds of body weight.

Parsley, one of my favourite herbs for so many things, acts as a lymph and fluid mover as well as a de-wormer (vermifuge).

Make a parsley tea using **1/8** to ¼ cup of fresh parsley to 1 cup of water. Heat the water and steep for about five minutes. Give your dog 1 tsp of parsley tea for every 10 lbs of weight daily for *no more than 10 days*.

Caution: do not use parsley if your dog has kidney issues.

Dosing schedule

When dosing your dog with herbal wormers, it can be more effective to give them ten days on, five days off, and then ten days on.

It takes ten days to kill the worms.

When worms die off, however, they will lay eggs to propagate the next generation.

It takes about five days for the eggs to hatch so the treatment needs to be repeated to kill the new offspring.

You may wish to bring another stool sample to your vet after the treatment series to confirm the worms are gone

About the Author: Rita Hogan is a canine herbalist and co-founder of Farm Dog Naturals, an herbal remedy company for the All-Natural Dog. Rita combines nature with her love for dogs by offering consulting that focuses on dogs as individuals: mind, body and spirit. Her practice incorporates herbal medicine, complementary therapies and environmental stewardship to help dogs and people find balance and partnership with nature. Connect with Rita through her website www.canineherbalist.com