

## **Parasite Control**

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There are all sorts of parasites out there ready, willing and able to invade your pet. Parasites can live in or on the skin, in the ear, intestines, heart and other internal organs. Some parasites are internal parasites while other parasites are external parasites. Internal parasites live inside various body organs, while external parasites live on the skin or inside the ear (for example). A successful parasite is one who derives benefit from the host animal (the animal it is living in or on) but does not harm the host animal. These parasites cause no obvious problems in a normal, apparently healthy pet. However, they are depleting the host animal's nutrients and can weaken the pet's immune system making them more susceptible to secondary disease or causing to be an overall poor condition. That is why it is such a problem when the pet has parasites that are undetected because the apparently healthy animal is actually suffering from disease. In addition, these parasites can also cause disease in other animals and even people when the affected animal sheds the parasites in the environment.

Unfortunately, not all parasites are innocent little creatures just along for the ride. They cause serious health issues in the host animals depending on what organ system they are affecting. For example, fleas suck their hosts' blood but through their bite can transmit disease organisms or cause horrible allergic reactions to the skin due to their bites. Ticks are well recognized carriers of several diseases that cause serious illness in man and animal. Internal parasites can cause death of the host animal due to the severity of the infestation and location of the parasites. Heartworm disease is an excellent example of a deadly disease caused by parasitic worms. Intestinal worms are frequently found in puppies and can weaken their condition leading to poor development as well as death.

That is why prevention is the key when dealing with parasites. We have the capability to test for all varieties of parasites via fecal examinations and blood tests. These tests should be run on all new pets to be certain they are free of parasites but also to be sure they do not carry disease that can affect the pet owners. Children are especially susceptible to parasitic infections from pets.

Because it is a "germy" world out there it is important to have your pet screened yearly for parasites because they can easily pick up a parasitic infection outside. The problem exists because if your pet does pick up such an infection they may not show signs of disease until severe symptoms develop. That is why we recommend yearly fecal exams and heartworm tests to keep your pet safe as low as you and your family.