

PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF WHIPWORMS

Good sanitation is essential to the prevention and control of whipworm infection in our pets. The primary goal is to prevent the pet from ingesting infective whipworm eggs.

IMPORTANT POINTS:

- Whipworm eggs are not immediately infective; they have to sit out on the ground for about a month.
- Whipworm eggs in soil can last for years.
- Whipworm eggs are vulnerable to drying.

TO PREVENT INFECTION:

- On your property—Remove and properly dispose of feces daily.
- Outdoor dogs should be kept on an easily cleaned surface such as cement.
- On a walk—Keep your dog on a leash to prevent sniffing and eating of old fecal material on the ground.

TO ELIMINATE INFECTION:

- Follow our instructions for all three parts of the treatment program.
- Clean up (as much as possible) all fecal material from your pet's environment.
- Apply a drying agent such as lime to the affected areas to desiccate any remaining eggs.
- Continue to remove feces daily.
- Comply with fecal recheck reminders to ensure that your pet is free of this and other intestinal parasites.



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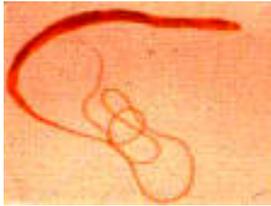


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*Caring for Pets and the
People Who Love Them*

Whipworms comprise a group of about 60 species that infect mammals. They get their name from their characteristic shape.



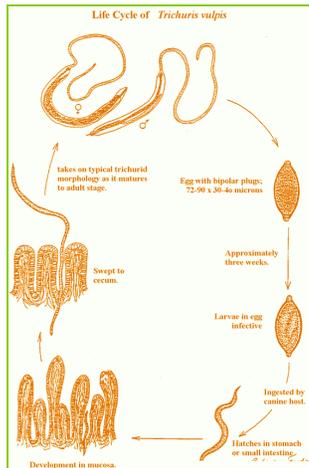
Adult *T. vulpis*

Trichuris vulpis is the whipworm that infects dogs, foxes and, rarely, cats. *T. vulpis* has occasionally been found to infect humans.

Whipworm infection is not common in dogs but, if not caught early, it can become a serious problem.

LIFE CYCLE OF WHIPWORMS

Whipworms have a direct life cycle, which means that no other animal is involved as a host.



An infected animal passes the eggs in the feces. It takes approximately **one month** for the infective larvae to develop in the eggs.

The larva is ingested by another animal (usually a dog). The larvae hatch and burrow into the wall of the lower small intestine (jejunum and ileum). The larvae go through four molts (growth stages) over the course of about 3 months, until they become mature adults capable of reproducing.

During this time they move down to the large intestine (cecum and colon). Here they attach to the wall by their thread-like heads, leaving their thicker bodies extending into the intestinal space.

Each female worm can produce **over 10,000 eggs each day** of her life, and she can live for several years!

HOW DID YOUR PET GET WHIPWORMS?

Pets become infected by ingesting infective larvae that have developed in the feces of an infected dog or fox.

WHY ARE WHIPWORMS BAD FOR YOUR PET?

Both larval (immature) and adult whipworms cause disease by burrowing into the digestive tract, causing irritation, and by ingesting blood. Clinical signs can range from absent to weight loss and severe, mucoid diarrhea with blood. Anemia can occur in severely infected dogs.



T. vulpis imbedded in intestinal wall

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR PET HAS WHIPWORMS?



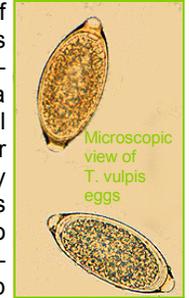
Posterior of male *T. vulpis*

As noted above, a mild infection may produce no signs of illness. However, as your pet continues to pass whipworm eggs into the environment, and ingest infective larvae, the number worms in the intestinal tract will increase. Your pet may have intermittent bouts of diarrhea, a picky appetite and weight loss.

The adult Whipworms range from 45 to 75 mm in length, so you will not see them in your pet's stool. The eggs are microscopic. The best way to find out if your pet is infected is by routine fecal examinations.

HOW DO WE DIAGNOSE WHIPWORMS?

When you drop off a specimen of your pet's feces, our technicians take a small portion (about 1/2 teaspoon) and mix it thoroughly with a concentrated solution of a special salt. The mixture is then left to sit for 15 minutes in our vented laboratory hood. The eggs of the whipworms are lighter than the salt solution, so they float to the top of the small container and stick to a glass cover slip that is placed across the top of the fluid. The technician then places the cover slip onto a microscope slide and examines it under the microscope for eggs.



Microscopic view of *T. vulpis* eggs

HOW DO WE TREAT WHIPWORMS?

There are several medications that are effective against adult whipworms in the intestinal tract, but none that will eliminate the larval (immature) forms. Successful treatment requires medicating your pet three times, to eradicate new adults as they mature. The first dose is given at the time of diagnosis, followed by a second, three weeks later, and a third, 3 months later. Fecal rechecks will ensure that our treatment and prevention programs are working well.

