



**Good Friends
Animal
Hospital**

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Hookworms

Hookworms are parasites that live in the small intestines of dogs and cats. They attach to the intestinal wall and feed on blood from the intestines. A heavy infestation of hookworms may cause severe anemia especially in a young pet. Other symptoms include diarrhea or a dark stool.

Eggs are passed out in the stool and hatch into larvae in the environment. The larvae penetrate the skin to gain access to a new victim, or they are ingested. In a pregnant pet, they pass through the placenta or into the mother's milk. Newborns are infested in this way. The larvae migrate to the small intestine and develop into adults.

Several medications are effective for treating hookworms. Whatever treatment your doctor prescribes, it should be repeated in 2 weeks because the medicine kills only the adults and not the immature larvae. Most hookworm medications also treat roundworms. A stool sample should be examined several days after the last treatment. Some of the monthly heartworm medications also control hookworms. Pets continually exposed to a contaminated environment have recurrent infestations of hookworms. However, hookworm larvae can also remain dormant in the body, reactivate later and develop into adults in the intestines, thus starting a new infection. In this case, frequent treatment is necessary.

Hookworms are a potential threat to humans. The larvae penetrate human skin as easily as our pets. In people, the larvae don't travel any further than the skin and cause a "creeping eruption" (migrating tracks of larvae under the skin). People who have a lot of contact with soil are at most risk. Clean up after your dog on a daily basis to minimize the environmental contamination. Keep children away from areas that your dog uses and keep sandboxes covered so cats stay out.