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Worms are parasites that live inside the body of the animal albeit in different locations. Dogs and cats can become infested with worms irrespective of age. There are different types of worms that affect dogs and cats, and some can even pose a risk to humans. Some of the important types of worms in the UK are listed below:

- Roundworms - adults are found in the intestine
- Hookworms - adults are found in the intestine
- Lungworms - adults live in the lungs
- Tapeworms - adults live in the intestine
- French Heartworm - adults live in a blood vessel close to the heart

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Often pets become infected with worms by picking up eggs and larvae from the soil, ingesting contaminated faecal matter, hunting rodents, and coming in contact with raw meat or carcasses. Puppies and kittens can become infected while in their mother's womb if the dam is already infected or through the dam's milk as they suckle. Thus, young pups and kittens as young as 2-3 weeks old can already have become infested with worms. Different worms have different means of infestation.

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Reduce the risk of your pet becoming infected by talking to your vet about preventing and controlling worms in your pet, including the various anti-parasitic agents available and the protocol best suited to your pet. For example, cats or dogs that hunt should be wormed more regularly. Help to reduce environmental contamination by worm eggs and larvae by always picking up your pet's faeces and disposing of it in a responsible manner.

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Most worms in the UK are relatively well tolerated by dogs and cats unless heavily infected. However, there is a constant threat of new worm infections entering the UK from abroad. Protection against these dangerous worms may involve more than the usual worm treatment, so be prepared and speak to your vet about how best to protect your pet if you plan to take it abroad and how to ensure that you don't bring any exotic worms back into the UK.

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Symptoms of dogs or cats who have worms can include loss of condition, lethargy, weight loss, anal irritation, diarrhoea and respiratory problems. In puppies and kittens, a heavy worm burden can also cause intestinal blockage with possible life threatening consequences. If you are concerned that your pet may be infected seek immediate advice from your vet.



ESCCAP is a not-for-profit organisation comprising a group of veterinary experts from across Europe. The group is dedicated towards giving vets and pet owners the best possible information available to help eradicate pet parasite infestations.

ESCCAP UK is a national association which brings together some of the UK's leading experts in the field of veterinary parasitology. ESCCAP UK provides vets and pet owners with UK relevant information to help protect against pet parasites.

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