

5 strange facts about parasites

Indoor cats *can* get worms

Did you know? Fifteen percent of plant potting soil contains hookworm or roundworm eggs, or both, according to a study in the *Veterinary Record* (Feb. 18, 2006). Cats can also get tapeworms from eating infected fleas. Adult fleas can be infected with the tapeworm cyst and when ingested and then digested, the cyst matures into the adult tapeworm and attaches to the gut. Once mature, the segments break loose and pass in the stool, which is usually what you see in the stool. A piece of “dried rice” found in the hairs around the anal area is usually a dried tapeworm segment and another sign of infection.

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Your dog can't give you pinworms

Dogs don't get pinworms. Humans get highly contagious pinworms from other people. Pet rabbits or horses can be infected with pinworms, but even those pinworms are species-specific.

Just because you don't see them, doesn't mean parasites aren't there

So you might think, “I don't see any worms in my pet's stool so (a) my pet does not have worms and (b) my pet doesn't need to be checked for worms.” Nothing could be farther from the truth. Regular stool exams are necessary to uncover these uncomfortable passengers.

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Pets don't carry bedbugs or lice

You have a better chance of winning the lottery before that would happen! Bedbugs are an environmental problem and are extremely unlikely to infect a cat or dog. For head lice or crab lice, transmission is strictly human to human.

Roaches, aside from being creepy, are carriers of worms

Cockroaches are a source of parasites for cats and indoor dogs. *Physaloptera spp.* (the stomach worm) comes from ingesting the roach—gross! Roundworm eggs can be found on the surface of the roach where they are ingested while pets play with the roach or eat it. Some research also indicates that feline asthma may be associated with cockroach debris.

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