

You know your kitten is **bugged, right?**

Most kittens have parasites, inside and out.

Everyone groups all of the intestinal parasites under the term “worms” and worms are certainly a big part of the problem. There are other parasites too that are not technically “worms.” The most important thing for pet owners to know about parasites is you usually cannot see them with the naked eye and they can cause big trouble before you even realize they are there. Parasites have evolved to be everywhere, and most cats have worms at some point in their lives, usually as kittens.

Won't I be able to tell if my kitten has worms?

Intestinal worms, like roundworms, can cause signs such as weight loss, an unkempt hair coat and a potbellied appearance but can be present even if your cat seems unaffected. It is a common misconception that a person can see worms in the stool if they look. In fact, your veterinarian has special testing protocols to find the worms. Occasionally, pet owners will see certain types of worms, but many of the worms only “appear” in the stool after you administer a de-wormer.

Worms and parasites contaminate the area where your pet hangs out and serve as a source of re-infection for your pets and other animals. Worms have evolved to be very effective at infecting animals and it requires an active effort on the

part of you and your veterinary team to head off these intestinal invaders.

Can't I just pick up a dewormer at the pet store?

There are certainly “over the counter” deworming options, but it is wiser to let your veterinary team find out for sure which type of parasites you need to treat. Only prescription medications can kill certain types of worms, and if there are other parasites that are not technically worms (like coccidia or *Toxoplasma* species), a completely different type of medication may be required. Only your veterinary team can find out exactly which parasites infest your individual kitten and target them specifically. No one wants their kitten to die from a treatable problem or to get medication that is inappropriate or unneeded, and certainly no one wants humans in the home to be affected.

What about fleas?

Fleas can make pets miserable. Flea saliva is an extremely irritating substance and flea bites cause profound pruritus (itching) for pets and people too. Fleas are another



thing that you will not see until the infestation is truly severe. Fleas love to get indoors where they can live year-round. Their goal is to have a blood meal so that they can lay eggs and make baby fleas. You will only see fleas on your kitten for a small part of their life cycle. That means that for every flea you see with your eyes, there are countless more in the environment. If you see a flea, alert your veterinary team.

Your veterinarian is well-versed in kitten infections and infestations and can recommend safe and effective products to help her not be “bugged”!