



## You know your kitten is bugged, right?

An article by dvm360 in association with Kathryn Primm, DVM, and modified for Evergreen Veterinary Hospital

Most kittens have parasites, inside and out. Intestinal parasites can be grouped under the term “worms”, and worms are certainly a big part of the problem. There are other parasites too, however, that are not technically “worms”. The most important thing for pet owners to know about parasites is that 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 haircoat 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 just simply look. In fact, Evergreen follows testing protocols to find these worms microscopically. Occasionally, pet owners may see certain types of worms, but many of these only appear in the stool after a de-wormer has been administered.

Worms and parasites contaminate the area where your pet hangs out and serves as a source of re-infection for your pet and other animals. Worms have evolved to be very effective at infecting animals and it requires an active effort of both you and the Evergreen team to keep these intestinal invaders away.

### ***Do the worms affect me?***

Intestinal worms will not affect humans in the same manner that they affect pets, but they can still cause problems in people. Roundworms and hookworms can affect the eyes and skin of people, respectively.

### ***Can I just pick up a de-wormer at the pet store?***

There are certainly over-the-counter deworming options, but it is wiser to let the Evergreen Team find out for sure which type of parasites need to be treated. 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. Evergreen can find out exactly which parasites infest your individual kitten and target them specifically.



***What about fleas?***

Fleas can make pets miserable. Flea saliva is an extremely irritating substance and flea bites cause profound pruritus (the medical term for 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 bloodmeal so that they can lay eggs and produce baby fleas to continue the cycle all over again. The fleas will be on your kitten where you can see them only for a short part of their life cycle. That means for every flea you see with your eyes, there are countless more in the environment. If you see a flea, alert the Evergreen Veterinary Team right away!