

# FLEAS, WORMS, AND YOUR FAMILY

Both indoor-only and indoor/outdoor kitties can be affected by fleas, heartworms, intestinal worms, and other parasites. Feline parasites are divided into two broad categories: those that live outside the body (such as fleas, mites, lice, and ticks), and those that live inside the body (such as roundworms, hookworms, whipworms, tapeworms, and heartworms).

Parasites are not only annoying to you and your cat, they can also spread disease and, if left untreated, may lead to serious medical problems. This hand-out provides information about various feline parasites and the products available to help protect your kitty and your family.

**Fleas** can cause a severe allergic reaction when they bite your kitty, causing your kitty to scratch themselves raw in bitten areas. Fleas can also be carriers of tapeworms, Feline Infectious Anemia, and Bartonella Henselae. Bartonella, a bacterial infection, can cause a variety of symptoms in your feline, including fever, loss of appetite, gingivitis, heart disease, enlarged lymph nodes, changes in behavior, and generalized tremors (although sometimes visible symptoms are not noted). The Bartonella bacteria is *zoonotic* (communicable from pets to people), and has been linked to Cat Scratch Disease in humans. If an infected feline bites or scratches a human, the bacteria may be passed along. We offer Bartonella testing at our hospital; if your kitty is infected, the bacteria is typically treated with a course of antibiotics.

The **roundworm**, a common and harmful parasite that cats can be exposed to, can also cause disease in humans. Children are often at greater risk of roundworm infection due to their higher likelihood of contact with contaminated soil, such as playing in a sandbox which a cat has used as a litter box. In humans, roundworms can affect a number of organs, including the eyes (which can lead to blindness).

Other zoonotic parasites include **hookworms** and **whipworms**, which can be contracted from walking or sitting in areas exposed to the parasites. **Tapeworms** live inside an infected flea and can be ingested by your cat during grooming. Tapeworm segments resemble small pieces of rice; white segments may be seen in the stool or on the cat's rectum.

**Heartworm** is carried by infected mosquitoes and is transmitted to your cat during a bite. Due to our climate conditions, mosquitoes are found year-round inside and outside the home. Over time, heartworm infection can cause severe heart or lung disease in cats.

**Fortunately, all of these parasites are easily preventable. Here are the products we recommend.**

**ADVANTAGE II** is a topical medication that helps protect against fleas. It's applied monthly to the back of your pet's neck, and targets all flea life stages—even eggs and larvae. You can purchase this medication without a prescription for all of the cats and dogs in your household.



**HEARTGARD** is a chewable treat given monthly to help protect against heartworms.

**DRONTAL** is a broad-spectrum dewormer. This pill, given in 2 doses, can provide optimal protection against worms for your kitty and your family. Typically this medication is given at least yearly; however, based on your cat's lifestyle, and whether or not you have children in your home, we will make a specific recommendation for medication frequency. (Other medications may be recommended for parasites diagnosed during fecal testing.) Drontal pills may be difficult to give at home, so our talented team members can assist you.

**ADVANTAGE MULTI** is a monthly topical medication, applied to the back of your kitty's neck, effective in guarding against fleas, heartworm, roundworm, hookworm, and ear mite infections.

Typically, a combination of these medications is used to help protect your kitty and your family against a variety of parasites. We will recommend a specific medication combination and dosage program just for your cat, and we offer very competitive product pricing. (Please note that some of these medications may require a wellness exam prior to dispensing.)

Please ask us for additional information about feline parasites. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.



For additional information about feline parasites, please speak with one of our doctors.