Zoonosis to watch: Roundworm infection

A zoonosis (zoh-oh-NOH-sis) is an infectious disease that people can catch from animals, and vice versa. Regular veterinary visits, preventive vaccinations and medications, and good hygiene can help prevent them.

Below are details about a common zoonosis, its symptoms, how it’s transmitted, and how to prevent it. Check with your veterinarian to make sure your pet is protected against this and other zoonotic diseases.

**Roundworms**
Large (3- to 18-cm) worms that are usually tightly coiled when passed and look like spaghetti.

**Signs**
- **Puppies & kittens:** Failure to gain weight, poor hair coat, pot-bellied appearance; puppies of 4 to 6 months of age with heavy infections may expel a large mass of worms in their vomit  
- **Adult dogs & cats:** Vomiting  
- **People:** Pneumonia-like symptoms, skin staining from damage to internal organs, and irritated retinas from damage to the eyes

**How it’s transmitted**
- **Puppies & kittens:** Crossing through the placenta from the mother, and ingesting eggs in feces  
- **Adult dogs & cats:** Ingesting eggs in feces and in infected animals like rodents  
- **People:** Ingesting eggs through feces in soil or on pets and ingesting items contaminated with infected feces

**People most at risk**
- Children

**How to prevent it**
- Deworm puppies and kittens every two weeks until they can receive a monthly control product.  
- Promptly treat infected pets to prevent shedding of eggs, which are hardy and long-lived.  
- Promptly remove animal feces from the yard and litter box.  
- To help prevent ingestion of infected animals or feces, keep dogs on leashes or in fenced yards and keep cats indoors.  
- Monitor children playing outside in sandboxes and parks.

Source: Julie Legred, CVT