

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.