



勝利動物醫院  
Victory Animal Hospital

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## Hookworm Infection in Dogs

### What are hookworms?

Hookworms (*Ancylostoma caninum*, *Ancylostoma braziliense*) are intestinal parasites of the cat and dog that get their name from the hook-like mouthparts they use to anchor themselves to the lining of the intestinal wall. They are only about 1/8" (3 mm) long and so small that it is very difficult to see them with the naked eye. Despite their small size, they ingest large amounts of blood from the tiny vessels in the intestinal wall. A large number of hookworms can cause life-threatening anemia. This problem is most common in puppies, but can occur in adult dogs.

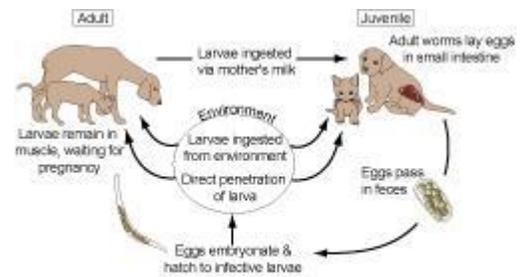
### Are some dogs more likely to get hookworms?

Hookworms are more common in warm, moist environments. **Conditions of overcrowding and poor sanitation contribute to infection.**

### How do dogs get hookworms?

Dogs may become infected with hookworms by one or all of four routes:

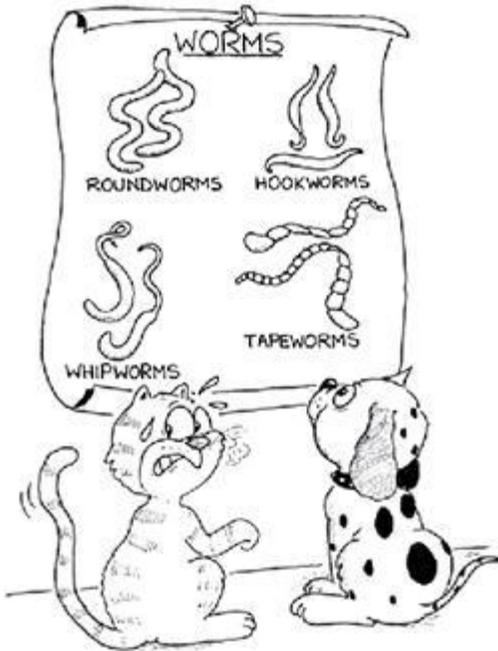
- Orally
- Through the skin
- Through the mother's placenta before birth (in utero)
- Through the mother's milk



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Female hookworms pass hundreds of microscopic eggs in the feces of infected dogs, where they contaminate the environment. Larvae hatch from the eggs and can remain infective in the soil for weeks or months. A dog may become infected when it inadvertently swallows hookworm larvae, often by grooming its feet, or from sniffing feces or contaminated soil.

## What are the clinical signs of hookworm infection?



The most significant clinical signs are related to intestinal distress and anemia. The parasites anchor themselves to the intestinal lining so that they can feed on tissue fluids and blood, injecting an anti-coagulant substance, which can cause continued bleeding after the hookworm has detached from the feeding site. Therefore, the dog can suffer blood loss from the hookworms' feeding, as well as continued bleeding into the bowel from the attachment sites, causing anemia. Pale gums and weakness are common signs of anemia. Some dogs experience significant weight loss, bloody diarrhea, or failure to grow properly with hookworm infection. It is not uncommon for young puppies to die from severe hookworm infections.

## How are hookworms diagnosed?

Hookworms are diagnosed with a microscopic examination of a stool sample by a technique called fecal flotation. The stool is mixed with a solution that causes the parasite eggs to float to the top of the solution and adhere to a glass slide placed on its surface. Since there are many eggs produced daily and the eggs have a unique appearance, hookworm infections are easily detected.

## How is a hookworm infection treated?

There are several effective drugs, called *anthelmintics*, which will eliminate hookworms. Most are given orally and have few, if any, side effects. However, these drugs only kill the adult hookworms.

**"It is necessary to treat an infected dog again in about two to four weeks..."**

Therefore, it is necessary to treat an infected dog again in about two to four weeks to kill any newly formed adult worms that were larvae at the time of the first treatment.

*This client information sheet is based on material written by: Ernest Ward, DVM*

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