

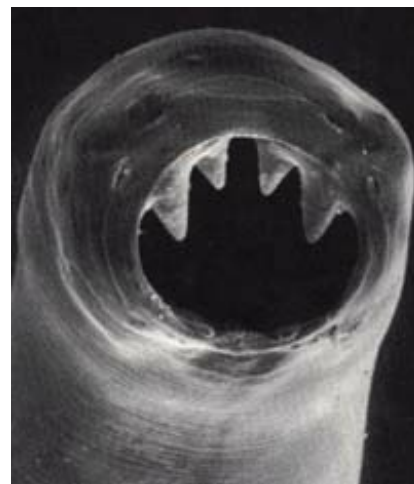
# Hookworms in Cats – Symptoms, Diagnosis and Treatment

 [www.cat-world.com.au/hookworms-in-cats.html](http://www.cat-world.com.au/hookworms-in-cats.html)

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## Hookworms at a glance:

- **About:** Hookworms are small parasitic worms which live in the small intestines.
- **Transmission:** Cats become infected via skin penetration, ingesting larvae in the environment and possibly in-utero and via the mother's milk.
- **Symptoms:** In many cases, there will be no symptoms if they do occur they can include black, tarry stools, anemia and poor coat condition.
- **Treatment:** Anti-worming medication.



## What are hookworms?

Hookworms are small, thin nematodes that are approximately 10 to 20 mm in length and are a common intestinal parasitic worm of dogs but can also infect cats.

They live in the small intestine of the cat, attaching themselves to the intestinal wall using teeth-like hooks where they feed on the blood and tissue. Blood loss can lead to anemia, intestinal bleeding, intestinal inflammation, diarrhea and even death.

## Types of hookworms:

There are several types of hookworms to infect cats, *Ancylostoma* and *Uncinaria*

- *A. braziliense*
- *A. ceylanicum*
- *A. tubaeforme*
- *U. stenocephala*

## Transmission:

Cats can become infected in a number of ways, which are listed below:

- **Via the skin (penetration):** When a cat comes into contact with an environment infected with hookworm larvae which can penetrate the skin, from there they migrate to the intestine where they mature, called ***percutaneous infection***.
- **Ingestion:** Cats can also become infected by ingesting infective larvae in the environment, during grooming or via contaminated water and food.
- **In utero:** Worm eggs may be passed on from mother to her unborn puppies via the placenta. It hasn't

been established if this is the case with feline hookworms yet.

- **Transmammary:** Again, in dogs, it is possible for hookworm infection to be passed to her puppies via the breast milk. When a dog becomes infected with hookworms most of them migrate to the small intestine. However, some enter other tissues of the body, becoming dormant for years. During pregnancy, they reactivate, migrating to the mammary glands and out through the milk. It hasn't been established if this is the case with cat hookworms yet.

## Life cycle of hookworms:

Hookworm eggs pass into the environment via the cat's stool. Depending on conditions, within 2 – 5 days these eggs hatch into infective larvae (immature worms). At this point they can infect a passing cat.

Once the cat comes into contact with infective larvae, they travel to the small intestine where they hook onto the wall and mature. When they reach maturity, they lay hundreds of eggs which pass out of the body via the feces, these eggs can survive for a long period of time in the environment.

## Symptoms:

Symptoms of hookworms vary depending on the severity of infection and the type of hookworm involved. In some cats, no symptoms are apparent. When symptoms do appear, they typically include:

- Black or bloody stools due to bleeding in the intestines
- Anemia (weakness, pale gums)
- Diarrhea
- [Poor coat condition](#)
- Skin irritation, especially on the feet where hookworm larvae penetrate the skin
- Weight loss
- In kittens, stunted growth

## Diagnosis:

Your veterinarian will be able to diagnose hookworm via fecal flotation. A stool sample from your cat is mixed with a liquid solution, any eggs present in the feces float to the top which are collected and viewed under a microscope to determine the type (hookworm, roundworm etc) as well as the number of eggs present.

## Are hookworms dangerous to cats?

Hookworms are more prevalent in dogs than they are in cats, and when cats do have them, they are more likely to be in smaller numbers. Treat any worm infestations immediately. As hookworms feed on the cat's blood, cats can become anaemic. Adult cats are more resistant to hookworms than kittens.

## Treatment:

There are many effective medications to treat hookworms and your veterinarian will be able to recommend an effective product. Most worming medications come in two forms, either topical which is applied to the skin on the back of the neck or tablet form.

Severely infected kittens may require hospitalisation and blood transfusions to treat anemia.

## Do I need to worm my indoor only cat?

This is a debatable topic and veterinarians seem to vary in their opinion. Worm indoor cats twice a year as it is

possible to transport worm eggs into the house via our shoes. Speak to your own veterinarian if you are unsure if you should worm your indoor only cat.

## Can I catch hookworms from my cat?

You can, although they can't develop into the adult form as they do in cats. The infective larvae are found in the soil or sandy areas such as beaches or children's sandpits and are able to penetrate the skin. From there they migrate beneath the skin, causing a red, itchy skin eruption. Commonly affected areas are hands, feet, between the toes and buttocks however they can migrate to the eyes, causing blindness, this condition is known as **Cutaneous Larva Migrans** (also called *creeping eruption* or *ground itch*). Hookworm larvae cannot complete their life cycle and die in the epidermis.



## Prevention:

- Regular worming, as recommended for the particular brand of worming product you are using. Worm all cats in the house at the same time.
- Regular cleaning and removal of fecal waste in your cat's litter tray.
- Preventing hunting in cats.
- If you do allow your cat to go to the toilet in your garden if they do clean up any feces quickly.
- A female cat should be de-wormed two weeks prior to breeding and receive another dose late in pregnancy.
- Worm kittens from two weeks and every two weeks until they are 2 weeks old.

Adults and children should avoid walking barefoot in areas which have been defecated in by animals.

## Quick guide to cat worming products:

### **Advocate/Advantage Multi (Imidacloprid and Moxidectin)-Spot on (monthly)**

#### **Treats:**

Fleas (adult), roundworms, hookworms, lungworm and ear mites, also a heartworm preventative. Does not treat tapeworm.

#### **Pregnant females/kittens:**

9 weeks old. Safe use on pregnant and lactating females has not been established.

### **Aristopet (Praziquantel and Pyrantel embolate) – Tablets**

***Treats:***

Roundworm, hookworm, and tapeworm.

***Pregnant females/kittens:***

6 weeks old, can use on pregnant and lactating cats.

### **Excelpet (Praziquantel and Pyrantel Embolate) – Tablets**

***Treats:***

Roundworm, hookworm, and tapeworm.

***Pregnant females/kittens:***

6 weeks old, can use on pregnant and lactating cats.

### **Heartgard (Ivermectin and Pyrantel)-Chews**

***Treats:***

Roundworm, hookworm, heartworm preventative.

***Pregnant females/kittens:***

6 weeks old, can use on pregnant and lactating cats.

### **Milbemax (Milbemycin Oxime and Praziquantel)-Tablets**

***Treats:***

Roundworm, hookworm, tapeworm, it is also a heartworm preventative.

***Pregnant females/kittens:***

6 weeks and over 500g, can use on pregnant and lactating cats.

### **Profender (Praziquantel and Emodepside)-Spot on (monthly)**

***Treats:***

Roundworm, hookworm, tapeworm, and lungworm.

***Pregnant females/kittens:***

8 weeks and over 500g, can use on pregnant and lactating cats.

### **Purina Total Care (Pyrantel embolate and Niclosamide)-Paste and tablets**

***Treats:***

Roundworm, hookworm, and tapeworm.

***Pregnant females/kittens:***

6 weeks old, can use on pregnant and lactating cats.

### **Revolution (Selamectin)-Spot on (monthly)**

#### ***Treats:***

Fleas (adult, larvae and eggs), intestinal worms (*except tapeworm*), lungworm and ear mites. Heartworm preventative. Does not treat tapeworm.

#### ***Pregnant females/kittens:***

6 weeks old. Can use on pregnant and lactating cats.