

Newsletter of the COMMUNITY PRACTICE SERVICE

College of Veterinary Medicine, Washington State University
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Fall 2007

Common worms that can affect you and your pet

Roundworms, tapeworms, and hookworms are common problems for pets, but, worse yet, these intestinal parasites can cause health problems for their owners as well.

Ringworm is another common problem that can affect both pets and people, but ringworm is actually a contagious skin infection caused by a fungus, not by a worm.

"Worms are not seasonal, and any dog or cat that hunts can get roundworms or tapeworms from eating rodents," said **Dr.**

Raelynn Farnsworth, a veterinarian on the WSU Community Practice team. "Pets can also get intestinal parasites from eating infected animal feces. Hookworm larvae can gain access to the body through an open cut, too.

"Puppies are very commonly infected. They can become infected with worms from their mother before they are born or from nursing," she said. "Puppies and kittens should be dewormed at least twice on their first visits to the veterinarian when they receive their initial vaccine series, or as early as two weeks of age. Any outdoor dog or cat should also be routinely dewormed."

In addition, pets should have a fecal sample examined at every annual checkup. "Owners should always bring in a fecal sample for an annual exam because you can't see all types of worms with the naked eye," Dr. Farnsworth said. "Roundworms and tapeworms can be seen, but hookworms and other intestinal parasites can only be seen under a microscope."

A fecal sample should also be taken and tested anytime an owner sees worms in a pet's stool. Tapeworms tend to appear like flat, white rice kernels and may be seen either in the stool or stuck around a pet's anus. Roundworms are 3-5 inches long, white, round, and look similar to spaghetti. They can be passed in stool or vomit.

Deworming medication and stool samples exams are primary measures that should be taken, not only to protect pets, but also because roundworms, hookworms, and tapeworms are considered

zoonotic diseases. This means people can contract these worms from being around their pets, and more often than not, most cases involve children.

Roundworms

Pets are exposed to roundworms when they eat roundworm eggs, which hatch once they are ingested. Sources generally include rodents with roundworms in their stomachs or animal feces laced with eggs.



Roundworms found in a dog

Once roundworm larvae hatch, they can travel throughout the body, including the liver, lungs and other organs. Animals that have roundworms may not display any symptoms, but some may have diarrhea or trouble keeping weight on. Puppies may also have very round bellies because they are full of worms. They can get roundworms from their mother's milk, while kittens cannot. Heavy infestations can potentially cause pneumonia and

even death in young pets.

Roundworm eggs can accumulate in large numbers in soil where an infected animal passes feces. People can become infected with roundworms by ingesting roundworm eggs or larvae found in or on contaminated soil, plants, vegetables, or feces. In people, roundworm larvae and adult worms can potentially cause tissue or nerve damage. If they lodge in the eye, nerve damage or blindness may occur.

Hookworms

Hookworm larvae or eggs can infect pets and people when ingested, or when larvae gain access into the body through open cuts or skin. If a pet has hookworms, parasitic eggs are passed out of the host's body in feces, and incubate in the soil where they were deposited. People generally acquire an infection from walking on or handling

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To make an appointment call:
509-335-0711



In this issue:

Common worms that can affect you and your pet	1
Outdoor plaza for pets installed at WSU's Veterinary Teaching Hospital	2
Why is my dog scooting his bottom on the floor?.....	3
WSU's Spay and Neuter program	3
Choosing a pet.....	4
Choosing a veterinarian.....	4
Why come to the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital?.....	5
Fall weather pet tips	6
Grieving? You don't have to be alone	6

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Worms | *continued from page 1*

contaminated soil with their bare feet or hands. Pets also get them from eating contaminated feces.

At first, hookworm larvae move within skin tissue. This causes painful and itchy skin infections where they migrate in both people and pets, commonly between the toes. Some hookworms can penetrate deeper and potentially damage the intestines and other organs.

It takes about six weeks for hookworms to develop into the adult stage. As adults, the worms attach themselves to the small intestine and begin to suck blood. In pets, signs of infection include diarrhea, bloody diarrhea, lethargy, and anemia. In humans, the symptoms are similar and include abdominal pain, decreased appetite, diarrhea, weight loss, and anemia. Without treatment, a single hookworm can live up to 14 years inside its host.

Tapeworms

Pets and people get tapeworms from swallowing fleas infected with tapeworm larvae, not from touching or eating contaminated stool. A dog or cat may swallow a flea while self-grooming, or may become infected after eating an infected rodent.

People may accidentally swallow a flea from being around flea-infested pets in the home, which may get on a person's

hands after petting, or if their pet licks them. Children may also encounter fleas when playing in a sandbox. Infections can also occur from eating tapeworm cysts in undercooked meat.

Tapeworms are generally not harmful to pets or people. Heavy infestations may cause weight loss, diarrhea, abdominal pain, and rectal or anal itching from tapeworm segments that crawl out on the skin. Because there may not be any symptoms, tapeworms are often diagnosed when pet owners actually see worm segments in stools or on the anus.

Treatment and prevention

There are several very effective medications available to quickly rid both people and pets of these types of worms.

"The way to stop your pet from being the source of infection is to have fecal samples tested at regular checkups, and deworm them on an appropriate schedule, which owners can discuss with their veterinarian," Dr. Farnsworth said.

Because these worms often live in the soil where animals deposit feces, it is also a good idea for pet owners to clean their yard daily from animal feces. In addition, pet owners and their children should use gloves while gardening, wash their hands after being outdoors, keep shoes on their feet, and thoroughly clean any cuts or scrapes.

For more information, contact the WSU Community Practice at 509-335-0711 or look online at the Centers for Disease Control Web site at www.cdc.gov/healthypets.

Outdoor plaza for pets installed at WSU's Veterinary Teaching Hospital

The memory of a beloved standard poodle, Solar, led to the dedication of an outdoor plaza at Washington State University's College of Veterinary Medicine in honor of the pet in April.

Solar was the long time companion of Michael Chamberlin of Seattle. Chamberlin recognized a need for such a space when he spent time at WSU's Veterinary Teaching Hospital while Solar was undergoing cancer therapy.

"There wasn't a convenient grassy area close to the hospital entrance," Chamberlin said. "I felt it is important for ailing pets to access natural space to spend time with its owner in the eastern Washington outdoors."

Chamberlin suggested to Dr. Harmon Rogers, director of WSU's Veterinary Teaching Hospital, that a garden area near the hospital entrance be restored for the convenience of in-patient animals. Chamberlin backed up his idea with a gift of \$10,000 to the veterinary college. With a little power equipment and some manual labor from the University's physical plant, the area was transformed.

The Solar Plaza, as it is known, is located on the northeast corner of the Veterinary Teaching Hospital adjacent to the main



entrance. The landscape design features a soothing natural basalt stone fountain and an eye-pleasing collection of evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs. Large natural stones and wood benches provide creature comforts for both animals and owners. A lazy, serpentine pathway made with crushed stone complements the layout.

A bronze plaque provided by Chamberlin is inscribed with "In loving memory of Solar Chamberlin, 1992–2005. A ray of light, courage, and hope for all during his lifetime and beyond."

"I wanted to make life a little easier for animals undergoing treatment at WSU's world class Veterinary Teaching Hospital," said Chamberlin, explaining his gift. "WSU is home to one of the nation's best equipped veterinary teaching hospitals and today it is even more 'pet friendly' than before."

"Most medical organizations receive lots of good suggestions for improving care and most are out of financial reach,"

said Warwick Bayly, dean of the WSU veterinary college. "Rarely though, does a person step forward with a gift to accompany a vision. We can't thank Mr. Chamberlin enough."

Why is my dog scooting his bottom along the floor?

Many people may think this unsightly behavior means their dog has worms. While a possibility, it is much more likely that the dog has clogged anal sacs.

Anal sacs are a normal part of canine anatomy, and are located at about 4 and 8 o'clock around the anus. These sacs contain glands that produce strong smelling, oily secretions that are normally expressed on stool as a dog defecates. The secretion odor is what dogs smell when they greet each other with familiar sniffing, and they also use it to mark territory.

Normally the contents of the sac are fluid, but if the fluid thickens or if the sac gets too full and the opening becomes clogged, it can cause pain and irritation for a dog. The sac may eventually become infected and even abscess.

"Sometimes scooting helps the dog express the sac," said **Dr. Raelynn Farnsworth** of the WSU Community Practice Service. "Dogs with the problem may also lick or bite at their anus. If you see a dog doing this, bring them in to a veterinarian."

A clogged anal sac may not affect the overall health of the animal, but a pet trying to express the sac or gland may injure the area while scooting. They may also manage to express foul-smelling secretions on their owner's carpet or floor.

"Some pet owners or groomers may express the sac externally, but if it is expressed improperly or too often, it can cause irrita-



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tion and inflame the sac even more," Dr. Farnsworth said. "Veterinarians can clean it internally, help the owner figure out why the dog has this problem, and treat the root cause."

Common treatable causes include if the pet has loose stools that do not put enough pressure on the sac to express it, or allergies that can cause the area to become inflamed. A dog's body size or confirmation may also play a role.

"Smaller dogs are sometimes more predisposed to this problem, as well as those that have allergies, which happens more often in purebred dogs," she said. "This may also occur when a dog is not passing solid stools, so part of treatment would be adding fiber to that dog's diet."

If the sac becomes infected, veterinarians can anesthetize the pet to flush it out, and then treat the dog with antibiotics. Anal sacs do not serve much purpose, so if a dog suffers from chronic clogging or infection, the sacs can be removed surgically.

Cats also have anal sacs and can suffer from the same problems. To ensure the sacs are emptying properly, pet owners can have their veterinarian check their animal on a regular basis or during a routine checkup. For more treatment information or to make an appointment, contact the WSU Community Practice Service at 509-335-0711.

WSU's Spay and Neuter Program

Many regional shelter animals are more likely to be placed in a new home after a visit to Washington State University's College of Veterinary Medicine.

WSU's veterinary college operates a limited free spay and neuter service for area shelters. In return, WSU veterinary students gain vital surgery training while working alongside faculty veterinarians.

Since 2002, more than 2,000 dogs and cats have been spayed or neutered free of charge and returned to the Whitman County Humane Society in Pullman, Hope's Haven in Saint Mary's, Idaho, and the Humane Society of the Palouse in Moscow, Idaho.

"The service is a real advantage to both the animals and our students," said **Dr. Harmon Rogers**, director of the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital. "The number of unwanted kittens and puppies are reduced in our area, the animals have a greater chance of placement, and our students gain skills critical in their future career."

The program costs WSU approximately \$50,000 annually and is paid for by the WSU veterinary college's teaching funds

because it is considered part of the curriculum for training veterinarians. This program is not subsidized through state resources.

"The spay and neuter surgeries are done on an as-needed basis," Dr. Rogers said. "In some years since the program's inception, over 700 animals have received surgery, but now the average is more around 400 annually. These lower numbers mean that the program is working to control pet overpopulation."

The program is directed toward animal control facilities, rather than nonprofit or private rescue groups. The WSU Community Practice Service also provides spays to the general public for \$120-150 for each dog or cat, and neuters for \$80 and up for each animal treated.

While the surgeries are performed by fourth-year veterinary students, each surgery is supervised by clinical faculty veterinarians. "The student does the procedure, but there is an anesthetist observing the pet, one or more nurses assisting,



Fourth-year veterinary student **Cassandra Mundy** with her patient **Beatrix**

and one faculty graduate veterinarian immediately available for assistance," Dr. Rogers said. "Complications are very rare, with less than two in 1,000 animals that have post-surgical problems."

In addition to the surgery, WSU veterinary students are also involved

with the patient's whole stay. They start by giving the animal a complete physical examination. The patient then has laboratory work-up necessary for surgery. The students set up the anesthesia procedure, perform the surgery, and help with the animal's recovery after surgery and post-operative care. Animals that undergo the surgery are generally at the veterinary teaching hospital for two days to five days.

For more information or to schedule spay or neuter surgery for a fee in your pet, contact the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital at 509-335-0711.

Choosing a pet

Owning an animal can be one of the most rewarding investments a family can make. Whether it's riding a horse, petting your cat, or just seeing that welcome wag of the tail at the end of the day, animals enrich our lives.

If you would like a pet, but don't have one, consider a few issues before choosing. First, ask yourself if you have time for a pet. The American Animal Hospital Association says cats need 30 to 60 minutes of your time per day. Dogs need more than one hour per day on average. Pet ownership is a serious bond requiring the time and energy to feed, clean, handle, train, and exercise your pet. Responsible pet ownership also includes timely vaccinations, proper and regular health care, sound nutrition, pet overpopulation measures, and a safe environment.

If you are considering owning a dog or cat, your first choice may be a puppy or kitten. But don't overlook adult pets that may be unwanted or among the many animals available through local shelters and purebred rescue organizations.

Adult dogs or cats are usually housebroken and are used to a less rigorous feeding schedule than puppies or kittens.

Owning a pet is a big responsibility that requires thought and planning on the prospective owner's part. Before bringing a new pet into your home, also consider the following: Does your pet fit in with all members of your family including infants, toddlers, and any senior citizens that may live with you? Can you cope with an animal that requires daily attention to food, exercise, and well-being? Do you realize a dog or cat may live from 10 to 20 years?



Choosing a veterinarian



It is a common saying that you can't choose your family, but you can choose your friends. One of those friends might just be your veterinarian, or at least it may seem so to your pet.

When searching for the best possible health care for a pet, there are a number of things for owners to consider when choosing a veterinarian or veterinary practice.

First, it is important to be sure that the veterinarian or practice provides all the services that your pet may need. "Most companion animal practices provide wellness care, surgery, dental services, and medical care," said **Dr. Harmon Rogers**, director of the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital. "For pets with special needs, it may be better to choose a practice that also provides emergency care, overnight hospitalization, and physical therapy."

The location of the practice is another important consideration. "Most clients find it convenient to travel less than 20 minutes to their veterinarian, and there are a lot of reasons for that," Dr. Rogers said. "Many pets don't like to travel in a car, which can add stress to both the animal and the owner. There is also the potential that important or preventative care might be delayed if an animal in an emergency situation has to travel longer for veterinary help."

A third factor to consider is the process for medical care in the practice. This includes assessing the level of caring, compassion, and communication provided.

"Many people find this difficult, but one of the best ways to do this is to visit the practice prior to an urgent medical need," Dr. Rogers said. "In doing that, a pet owner can obtain a first-hand assessment of the atmosphere and attitudes of not only the veterinarians, but also the staff that works there."

Pet owners may find it helpful to contact the state veterinary medical association for references, or use the yellow pages to make a list of veterinary practices that may be suitable. Some practices may offer specialty certifications and accreditations from the American Animal Hospital Association. Owners can also access public databases, such as the Washington State Department of Health, to read about any quality assurance issues involving a particular practitioner, or to look up a veterinarian's credentials.

"If you are new to an area, ask if you can visit a practice," Dr. Rogers said. "See how you are received, and ask if you can tour the facilities and talk with the veterinarians. Look to see if they are interested, enthusiastic, organized, clean, and thorough."

"Also assess how communicative both the staff and the veterinarians are," he said. "See if they listen and comprehend your views and needs and are adaptable. Hopefully, they will be excited to get to know you and meet your needs. Also ask for references and if they can refer you to a specialist. If they are confident in their abilities, they should be comfortable giving you the information you want."

"If you do these things, you will get a good feeling for how you will be treated as a client," he said. "If still undecided, friends and neighbors can usually provide a good idea of which practices or veterinarians in an area have good reputations and are respected by their clients."

Why Come to WSU's Veterinary Teaching Hospital?

Every day, veterinarians at WSU's College of Veterinary Medicine provide state-of-the-art medical care for animals and return them to their caring owners. From dogs, cats, and horses to parakeets, cattle, alpacas, llamas, and iguanas, animals from all walks of life are treated in our world-class clinical teaching facilities.

The Washington State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital (VTH) is open to the public without a referral 24 hours a day. It is a full service hospital and referral center for the Pacific Northwest and western Canada. The teaching hospital is also part of the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences, one of three academic departments in the College of Veterinary Medicine. The hospital offers services to both large and small animals, as well as some nearby livestock units.

The VTH is a state-assisted \$38 million facility which opened in September 1996. Each year, about 15,000 animals are treated here. The nearly three-acre facility encompasses the hospital, clinical laboratory, and epidemiological surveillance service, all under one roof. The central core provides space for surgery suites for small and large animals, clinical pathology, seminar rooms, administrative areas, reception, special medicine and diagnostic areas, and the state's only pharmacy dedicated exclusively to animals.

The VTH enjoys the finest medical imaging capabilities available to veterinary medicine worldwide. WSU is one of the most advanced veterinary hospitals in the world with such sophisticated systems as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computerized tomography (CT scan), and nuclear scintigraphy (bone scanning). In addition to these services, ultrasound, endoscopy, arthroscopy, laser surgery, and therapeutic technologies including surgery, medical management, and radiation therapy are available.

Specialized medical treatments in certain areas are also available at the VTH. These include cancer treatments that involve advanced surgical techniques, radiation therapy provided by the college's \$2 million linear accelerator, chemotherapy, and palliative care.

Client animals are treated by renowned specialists who are in the process of training compassionate and capable future veterinarians. Faculty in the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences conduct research to enhance current knowledge of diseases, diagnostics, and treatment. WSU veterinarians have made recent advancements in the diagnosis and treatment of brain tumors, neurological problems, and canine osteo-arthritis. They've conducted field disease investigations affecting herds and flocks, and expanded our knowledge of exercise and cardiac physiology and the passive transfer of immunity.

The Community Practice at WSU offers primary veterinary care to animals owned by the public. It operates much like a



Your WSU Community Practice team (back row, left to right) veterinary technician Tami Montgomery, Dr. Matt Mickas, Dr. Raelynn Farnsworth; (front row, left to right) veterinary technicians Angela Teal and Melody Gerber and Dr. Nickol Finch.

private veterinary hospital. Examinations and treatments proceed more slowly than in private practices, however, because of the increased attention given to patients associated with training third- and fourth-year professional students and postgraduate students. A team approach is used to evaluate patients that include faculty, residents, students, and staff.

The Community Practice has in-house consultation services available for specialized diagnostic tests and treatments, including radiographic imaging, such as CT scans or MR imaging, and cancer treatment.

Hours of Operation

The Veterinary Teaching Hospital is open for large and small animal **appointments** from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. **Emergency care** service is also available for large and small animals on a 24-hour basis. Clients with animals in need of emergency care should call the hospital at 509-335-0711 before arrival.

Fees

Fees on par with private practices are charged for all services provided by the VTH, with payment due in full at the time of service. Clients with animals treated as outpatients will be given an estimate of the cost before the service is provided, with payment due upon completion of the visit.

Clients with hospitalized animals will also be given an estimate, with prepayment of half the estimate due upon admission. The other half is due when the animal is discharged.

Directions

The WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital is located on the Washington State University campus in Pullman off Stadium Way and Grimes Way across from Lighty Student Services Building. To get to the hospital, turn right off of Stadium Way heading east onto Grimes Way. Then take the second right hand turn heading south on Ott Way where a brown sign on the corner says "Veterinary Hospital."

Want to know more about the Community Practice and small animal specialty services, or receive our quarterly newsletter online?

Then check out the WSU Veterinary College Web site at www.vetmed.wsu.edu/depts-vth/smallAnimalServices.aspx, or subscribe to the online newsletter at www.vetmed.wsu.edu/depts-vth/newsletters/online.asp.

Also feel free to call 509-335-0711 for **veterinary appointments** or **emergency care**.

Fall weather pet tips

Storing pet food—Pet food, like our food, loses much of its nutritional value over time. Pet food can also spoil and cause illness if fed. Store unused portions of dry pet food in a cool, dry location, and use all the food within six months of purchase. Lengthy storage decreases the activity and potency of many vitamins. Storing dry food in an airtight container will prevent further nutrient deterioration and help maintain its flavor, too.

Seasonal allergies—Common allergens that affect dogs and cats in the fall include molds from dying leaves and decaying plants and ragweed pollen, which can be especially heavy from the end of August through October. Signs of allergies in pets include inflamed, itchy skin that can lead to infections or a skin condition called atopic dermatitis. Pets may also cough, sneeze, or wheeze and have excess discharge that develops in the nose and eyes.

A veterinarian can prescribe medicine to help with allergic reactions when they occur. To help reduce allergic reactions, pet owners can bath and brush a dog or cat that has been outdoors once they come inside.

Hiking—Hiking is a great activity, but be sure to plan for yourself and your pet. Must-have items include a first aid kit that has sterile bandages, gauze, disinfectant, and surgical tape. Also bring insect repellent for fleas and ticks, and enough water for both you and your dog as streams and standing water may contain bacteria that can make a dog sick. You may also want to carry pet snacks,



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as well as an extra leash and collar. Dogs can get lost in unfamiliar surroundings, so make sure your pet has adequate identification, such as an ID tag on the collar or an identification microchip, or ideally both.

If a pet gets hurt on the trail and is bleeding, place a clean cloth over the wound and apply pressure for several minutes. Try to elevate the wound, and add more cloth if the first one soaks through, but do not remove what was already applied. Then do your best to get your pet to a veterinarian as quickly as possible. If no accidents occur, check paws and ears for

thorns and other material that it may have picked up after the hike. Lastly, dogs need conditioning like people, so if your pet is mostly sedentary, limit the hike to a few miles.

Hunting Season—With the arrival of hunting season, make sure pets are in safe areas and cannot be mistaken for game. If your dog hunts, make sure to apply tick control and that it is vaccinated for leptospirosis, a serious bacterial disease in dogs that can potentially spread to people. Sources of infection include pond water or puddles contaminated with the bacteria from wildlife urine, so hunting dogs are in greater need of vaccination. Owners should also check their dogs over daily for sporting injuries and foreign objects such as grass awns that may become lodged in the feet, ears, eyes, and nose. Also, early season hunts can provide a lot of heat stress to an unconditioned animal. Consider some pre-season walks to get both you and your dog off on the right foot.

Grieving? You don't have to be alone

Have you lost a beloved animal companion? Perhaps you know someone who has. Please know the WSU College of Veterinary Medicine has a Pet Loss Hotline for those who would like to reach out for a caring listener. WSU's Pet Memorial Program also offers families a way to memorialize and celebrate the life of their pet while supporting the education of future veterinary care providers.

To contact the Pet Loss Hotline, call 509-335-5704 or e-mail plhl@vetmed.wsu.edu.

For more information about the WSU Pet Memorial Program or to make a donation, contact Tim Osborn at 509-335-9516 or tosborn@vetmed.wsu.edu. Information can also be found online at www.vetmed.wsu.edu/depts-prd/memorial.aspx.