

Parasite activity throughout the year

Spring

- New born puppies are likely to be infected with the roundworm *Toxocara canis*. Ensure pups are treated from two weeks.
- Young kittens are likely to be infected with the roundworm *Toxocara cati*. Ensure kittens are treated from three weeks.
- Dogs and cats can pick up ticks from many places, such as woodlands inhabited by deer, upland regions and even from parks and gardens. Typically ticks are active in the spring (March – June) so pet owners should take care to ensure that they check their pets daily for ticks and protect against them.
- Any fleas residing in the house over the winter will quickly thrive as the warmer spring weather breaks through and pets and homes can quickly become infested with fleas.

Summer

- Warm summer days hasten the development of flea larvae in the environment. At this time of year, fleas can develop in as little as 14 days and female fleas are capable of laying up to 50 eggs a day.
- Infective stages of hookworms and other gut worms develop from eggs passed in the faeces. Development is quickest at this time of year which can lead to a build up of infective stages in the environment.
- If pets ingest fleas or chewing lice when grooming, they may contract the tapeworm *Dipylidium caninum* and so control of these ectoparasites will help control this tapeworm.
- Ticks may still be active throughout the summer, particularly in cooler areas, so pet owners should be vigilant for ticks even outside of the traditional tick seasons.
- In some parts of the UK, in late summer, harvest mites are active and looking for a host. They appear bright orange, often in small clumps, and cause severe irritation and dermatitis to dogs and cats.

Autumn

- Ticks have a second peak of activity in the autumn. Be vigilant for ticks during this season.
- Pet owners will continue to see fleas on their cats or dogs after the central heating is turned on, as this will continue to allow the development of the eggs in the environment. Parasites may be becoming dormant outside, but fleas thrive indoors!
- Inquisitive dogs outdoors might ingest slugs and snails and become infected with the lungworm *Angiostrongylus vasorum*. If the infection is common in the area, consider preventative treatments. Dogs can be infected at any time of year, but are perhaps at highest risk in autumn.

Winter

- Many antiparasitic flea treatments are conjoined with treatments for other parasites such as worms or ticks. Ensure that if pet owners are discontinuing flea treatments throughout the winter, they are not stopping treatment for the control of other parasites where necessary.
- Cats and dogs that hunt rodents and rabbits can acquire *Toxocara* spp. and *Taenia* spp. As this can occur in any season, dogs or cats that hunt should be wormed for tapeworms and *Toxocara* spp. throughout the year.
- Plan for the year ahead.

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