

CANINE ZOONOSIS

There are several intestinal parasites that dogs can transmit to humans (Zoonosis). Children and immunocompromised adults are especially vulnerable. In Colorado, the most common parasite we see is roundworms, *Toxocara* and *Toxascaris*. Roundworms live in the small intestines of the dog. They can be transmitted to other dogs through fecal material and to puppies by their mothers. If not treated, serious risks, especially to puppies and young dogs exist. They may show no signs initially but diarrhea, vomiting, weight loss, cough, malnutrition, weakness and large belly may be noted.

Transmission to people can occur by contact with a contaminated environment. Eggs and adult worms are shed in the feces of infected dogs. Children often put their hands in their mouths without washing them, therefore are more susceptible. The result of infection can be devastating. Anything from a fever, stomach ache, blindness and pneumonia, plus other symptoms can be seen.

Another parasite that can cause serious effects in people is hookworm. This is not as common in Colorado, but is always a risk. This worm can also be transmitted from mothers to puppies and from dog to dog through ingestion of larvae from fecal material in contaminated soil. Another way to become infected is the hookworm larvae in the soil can burrow through the skin. Like roundworms, when they mature in the small intestine dogs can become very sick. They can also have diarrhea, weight loss and weakness, but may experience pale gums and sudden death.

Transmission to people can be by larval penetration of our skin. Serious consequences such as skin rashes that can be debilitating can occur. This is known as cutaneous larval migrans. These parasites can be picked up in playgrounds, parks, dog parks and any soil or grassy areas that have been contaminated.

Please let us help you and your pet be free of these terrible diseases. We advise checking all pet's stool samples as soon as (or before) you bring them home. Even if the stool sample does not show a parasite at that time (it could be a false negative) we advise starting a schedule of deworming for each pet. This is safe for the pet and helps keep your children and family safe too. On all adult pets we advise checking stool samples for parasites every six months. We have hand outs in our hospital and are happy to answer any questions you may have.