

# TAPEWORM

The tapeworm is a parasitic worm found in the intestines of dogs and cats. It consists of a head (scolex) attached to the lining of the intestine and a long body made up of segments, called proglottids. These segments, which contain eggs, are shed and passed through the rectum, leaving the head still attached to produce new segments.

Symptoms of tapeworm infestation range from nonexistent to severe, depending on the size and number of worms present. Signs include digestive upsets, variation in appetite, poor hair coat and skin condition, weight loss, and vague signs of abdominal discomfort.

Diagnosis of tapeworms is made by finding the segments on your pet's feces, in his bed or clinging to the hair around the anal area. Unlike most other worms, the eggs are not generally found in a microscopic examination of the feces. When first passed, segments will be yellowish to white, about 1/4 inch long and may expand and contract. When dry, segments resemble small grains of rice.

Tapeworms are not passed directly from pet to pet, but require another animal, called an intermediate host, in which to develop. Common intermediate hosts are fleas and small mammals such as mice, rats, squirrels and rabbits.

Tapeworms may be eliminated from your pet by the administration of tablet or topical medication. It is also important to eliminate or reduce contact with the intermediate hosts, especially fleas, whenever possible, to prevent reinfestation.

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