

# HOOKWORM

## ZONOSSES FACTSHEET

Diseases that spread from animals to people

### WHAT IS IT?

Hookworms are a common intestinal worm of dogs and cats. The adult worms have teeth which help them 'hook' into the intestine to suck blood.

### HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Hookworm eggs survive best in warm, moist weather.

Human hookworm skin disease is called **cutaneous larval migrans**

Adult hookworms live in the intestine of dogs and cats. Female hookworms lay eggs which are passed in the animal's poo. Eggs in poo hatch into larvae (baby worms) in the environment. Larvae **can be eaten** by animals or humans through poo contamination OR **can travel through the skin** from the environment.

They can burrow through the stomach of the animal as they lie on the ground. They can also burrow through the soft skin of humans' bare feet, when walking barefoot in dirt, grass or sand.

Once in the body, hookworms can go straight to the intestines to grow into adults, or they may move through the lungs causing other problems, or they may 'get stuck' in other areas of the body, forming *cysts*.

Larvae stuck in cysts can begin to grow again later on, so an infected animal could spread Hookworm for a long time.

### WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

If you are concerned about rashes on your skin, ring the health clinic.

**In animals:** We might see white/pale gums due to bleeding in the gut. Animals may appear skinny, but have round pot bellies. .

**In people:** Starts out as an itchy rash (especially on feet). People can also get a gut disease (*eosinophilic enteritis*) but not much is known about this disease.



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3

### HOW DO YOU TREAT IT?



Image 4



Image 5



Image 6

### In animals:

- Use all-wormers every 3 months in adult dogs and cats
- De-worm puppies and kittens every every 2 weeks of age until 12 weeks (3 months) old, then every month until 6 months old, then every 3 months ongoing
- Worms can be passed from a mother dog to her puppies through the milk. It is important to de-worm mother dogs as well.

### Prevention of transmission to people:

- Practise good hygiene and wash hands with soap often
- Wear shoes when walking in dirt, grass or sand where there are free roaming dogs
- Wear gloves to pick up dog poo and put it in the bin
- Keep yards clean and dry

**For more information:** please contact AMRRIC on (08) 8948 1768, email us at [info@amrric.org](mailto:info@amrric.org) or visit our website: [www.amrric.org](http://www.amrric.org)

### REFERENCES

Brooks, W., 2019, Hookworms in cats and dogs, Veterinary Partner <https://veterinarypartner.vin.com/doc/?id=4951969&pid=19239>.  
Phelan, S., 2010, Dog Health Programs in Indigenous Communities – An Environmental Health Practitioner's Guide, AMRRIC. <https://www.amrric.org/resources/ehp-manual/>

Image 1: Cutaneous larval migrans caused by hookworm infestation in a person, photo courtesy of DermNetNZ <https://dermnetnz.org/topics/cutaneous-larva-migrans/>; Image 2: Pot bellied appearance of a wormy dog, photo courtesy of AMRRIC; Image 3: Pale gums of an anaemic dog, photo courtesy of AMRRIC; Image 4: Paragard <https://www.petstock.com.au/product/dog/paragard-allwormer-for-large-dogs/54337> Other images are stock photos.