

Dog's Recurring Tapeworm Infections

How to treat and prevent recurring tapeworm infections in your dog.

By Leslie Sinclair, DVM

Q. My Rottweiler has had numerous tapeworm infections, and I'm tired of it. What is the most effective treatment and the best way to prevent them?

A. Two kinds of tapeworms affect dogs. The least common, *Taenia pisiformis*, infects dogs that eat infected rabbits or rodents. Dogs acquire the more common tapeworm, *Dipylidium caninum*, by eating fleas.

Flea larvae often eat tapeworm larvae, which develop in the flea's gut. When a dog ingests a flea, usually while trying to rid herself of the pest, the flea is digested, leaving the tapeworm behind to attach itself within the dog's intestines. Once it develops into an adult, the tapeworm releases segments of itself (proglottids) that appear as wriggling, rice-like bodies in the dog's feces.

Ridding a dog of tapeworms is fairly simple. Taenid tapeworms are treated with the drug fenbendazole once a day for five days, and avoided by preventing the dog from eating rabbits and rodents. *Dipylidium* tapeworms are eliminated with a single dose of either praziquantel or febantel, and avoidance requires good flea prevention. Although tapeworms seldom do much damage to an adult dog, they are disgusting, and children are susceptible to infection.