

# Parasite control in kittens and cats



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There are two main categories of parasites that are of major concern for kitten and cat health: intestinal worms and fleas.

### Intestinal worms

These include roundworms, tapeworms and hookworms. Many kittens are born with roundworms and can acquire hookworms from their mother's milk.

Worms can cause anaemia (loss of red blood cells), weight loss and poor condition, dull coat and in severe cases intestinal obstruction. Some of these worms can also spread to people, particularly children, and can cause problems such as blindness or large cysts that develop in body organs.

There are many intestinal wormers on the market – some are more effective than others and some may not treat all types of worms. **Intestinal wormers should be given to kittens every two weeks until 12 weeks of age, then monthly until six months of age, and thereafter every three months throughout your cat's life.**

The intestinal wormers that we recommend are **Milbemax tablets** or **Profender Spot-on**. Profender is a liquid that is applied to the back of neck, avoiding the need for giving a pill. The dosage depends on the kitten's or cat's weight, and as kittens grow quickly it is always advisable to weigh your cat before medicating to ensure they are getting the right dose. There are also combination products that will treat intestinal worms as well as other parasites; see below for more details.

### Fleas

Fleas are a major cause of skin irritation in cats, causing them to over-groom, bite and scratch themselves, often causing significant damage to the skin in the process. Some cats may even be allergic to fleas and a single flea bite may be enough to cause severe irritation.

Fleas are usually transferred through contact with an infested area. There may only be small numbers of fleas on a cat at any one time; however, this small number is enough to produce a vast number of flea eggs, which can settle into carpets, bedding and any other sheltered areas. A single flea can lay up to 50 eggs a day, and these eggs can last up to six months before hatching.

There are several flea preventatives on the market. However, be aware that **flea collars, powders and shampoos will NOT be effective in controlling a flea problem**, as they do not provide sustained control for a long enough period.

We recommend the spot-on treatments **Advantage** or **Frontline** to prevent flea infestation; these are drops that are applied to the back of the neck between the shoulder blades. They should be applied monthly and are very effective in killing adult fleas. If there is a significant flea problem already in the house, a flea bomb may be required to kill the eggs and larvae already present in the house. Also remember that other animals may carry fleas, so all animals in the household must be treated at the same time, as well as their bedding, to prevent flea problems developing. There are also combination products that will treat fleas as well as other parasites; see below for more details.

### **Combination treatments**

There are also combination spot-on treatments available, such as **Advocate** and **Revolution**, that will treat fleas as well as other parasites.