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Canine Whipworm Infection

What are whipworms?

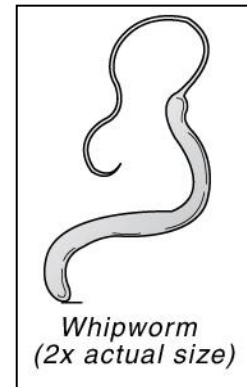
Whipworms are intestinal parasites which are about 1/4 inch (6 mm) long. They live in the cecum and colon of dogs where they cause severe irritation to the lining of those organs. This results in watery, bloody diarrhea, weight loss, and general debilitation. They are one of the most pathogenic worms found in dogs.

How did my dog get whipworms?

Whipworms pass microscopic eggs in the stool. The eggs are very resistant to drying and heat, so they can remain viable in the dog's environment for years. They mature and are able to reinfect the dog in 10-60 days. The eggs are swallowed and return to the lower intestinal tract to complete the life cycle.

How is whipworm infection diagnosed?

Whipworms are diagnosed by finding eggs with a microscopic examination of the stool. However, multiple stool samples are often required because these parasites pass small numbers of eggs on an irregular basis. Any dog with chronic diarrhea can be reasonably suspected to have whipworms, regardless of several negative stool examinations. It is an accepted practice to treat chronic diarrhea by administering a whipworm dewormer. Response to treatment is an indication that whipworms were present but could not be detected on fecal examination.



How are whipworms treated?

There are several drugs that are very effective against whipworms. Monthly treatments are needed, because of the life cycle of the worm treatments are continued for at least four treatments with a heartworm prevention product that contains an ingredient that prevents infection with whipworms.

The worms can also be treated with a liquid dewormer, your veterinarian will decide which treatment will be best for your dog.

Whipworms are not nearly as common today because of widespread use of these heartworm prevention products.

Can I get whipworms from my dog?

No. Whipworms are not infectious to people. They are exclusive parasites of the dog.

For more information regarding whipworms, or any other intestinal parasite log onto www.petsandparasites.org