

# Zoonosis to watch: Hookworm infection

A zoonosis (zoh-oh-NOH-sis) is an infectious disease that people can catch from animals, and vice versa. Regular veterinary visits, preventive vaccinations and medications, and good hygiene can help prevent them.

Below are details about a common zoonosis, its symptoms, how it's transmitted, and how to prevent it. Check with your veterinarian to make sure your pet is protected against this and other zoonotic diseases.

## Hookworms

Short [6- to 12-mm], thick worms that are whitish to reddish brown with a hooked front end.

## Signs

**Puppies & kittens:** Anemia and pale mucous membranes, failure to gain weight, poor hair coat, dehydration, and dark and tarry diarrhea

**Adult dogs & cats:** Usually few signs; often source of infection for puppies; can cause severe anemia, diarrhea, and weight loss in extreme cases

**People:** Red, itchy, serpentine lesions on the skin

## How it's transmitted

**Puppies & kittens:** Crossing the placenta and through the mother's milk

**Dogs, cats & people:** Ingesting them in feces and from the worms penetrating the skin (often from infected soil)

## People most at risk

Farmers, gardeners, landscapers, sunbathers lying on sand, plumbers, electricians, exterminators, and children playing in potentially contaminated areas

## How to prevent it

- Promptly remove animal feces from the yard.
- Cover children's sandboxes when not in use.
- Wear shoes and gloves while gardening.
- Wash hands thoroughly after playing outside or exposure to soil (especially dirt under the fingernails).
- Deworm puppies and kittens every two weeks until they can receive a monthly preventive and control product.
- To help prevent ingestion of infected animals or feces, keep dogs on leashes or in fenced yards and keep cats indoors.
- Monitor children playing outside in sandboxes and parks.