

## Protect Your Pet from Parasites This Summer

Now that summer is in full swing, parasite prevention in your pets should be too! A parasite is an organism that lives in or on another organism (its host) and benefits at the expense of the host.

Dr. Kimberly Kratt of Central Animal Hospital, Onalaska, says there are several intestinal parasites that are seen in cats and dogs. Although parasites can be seen year round, transmission of parasites is more frequent in the spring and summer. A common case seen by Dr. Kratt is roundworms in young puppies and kittens. Hookworms, tapeworms, whipworms and some protozoal parasites can also be found in pets

Intestinal parasites can put you and your pet's health at risk. According to Dr. Kratt, ingestion of eggs is the most frequent mode of parasite transmission to humans, but some parasites can crawl directly through the skin. This can be as simple as children putting their fingers in their mouth or crawling across a floor where a cat has walked after using the litterbox. Transmission can also occur from gardening or working outside where animal feces have previously been deposited. In addition, handling raw meat or eating undercooked meat can also expose a human to intestinal parasites.

To ensure the health of you and your pet, it is important to discuss parasite control measures with a licensed veterinarian. Keeping your pets on a good parasite control program is the best way to keep your family safe.

Be sure your pet has regular examinations with their veterinarian! Dr. Kratt suggests adult pets be seen by their veterinarian at least once or twice a year, depending on the pet. During this exam, an intestinal parasite screening should be done.

If an animal has any intestinal parasites he/she may show symptoms of discomfort, diarrhea, vomiting, or bloody stools. Most pets shedding intestinal parasite eggs do not have clinical symptoms, stresses Dr. Kratt. Pets showing symptoms of intestinal upset are likely severely infected. "Screening for intestinal parasites is a critical component in developing a parasite

control program,” states Dr. Kratt.

Dr. Kratt advises animal owners to see their veterinarian for dewormers rather than using an over-the-counter deworming product. A general dewormer cannot treat all the different parasites found in companion animals. Without veterinary consult, dewormers may end up causing resistance to deworming products in the future when your pet is in need of them. In addition, animals with very heavy worm burdens can experience severe, life threatening intestinal disorders after deworming. Dr. Kratt recommends these animals be dewormed under the care and supervision of a veterinarian.

Although young animals and pets with access to the outdoors are more likely to be carrying intestinal parasites, adult and indoor pets carry them as well. It is common for puppies and kittens to be born with roundworms or acquire them shortly after birth from nursing. Parasite eggs can remain viable throughout an animal’s life even after deworming and may eventually become infectious.

To reduce the risk of intestinal parasites in your pet, Dr. Kratt suggests regular fecal flotations by your veterinarian and regular deworming. Giving prescription heartworm preventatives monthly is another great way to limit your pet’s risk of intestinal parasite infection.

Contact your WVMA member veterinarian to discuss a parasite control program for your pet. To find a WVMA member veterinarian in your area, go to [www.wvma.org](http://www.wvma.org) .

## **Expecting Cows Get Ultrasounds Too!**

By Zach Janssen, DVM

As you probably know, most expecting mothers have an ultrasound examination performed at about the 20<sup>th</sup> week of their pregnancy. Did you know that cows can have ultrasounds too?

For generations, veterinarians have been helping cattle farmers be successful by determining if their livestock are pregnant. In livestock farming, a pregnant animal equals a productive animal. If the cow is determined to be pregnant, the farmer can then provide her with special care until she has her calf. If the cow is not pregnant, or “open” as it is commonly called in farming circles, then the farmer and veterinarian can formulate a plan to help her become pregnant as quickly as possible.

About two decades ago, veterinarians became familiar with a new technique that could help them in the determination of a cow’s pregnancy status. This new technology was called ultrasonography. Basically, sound waves are emitted from a probe and then bounce back to the probe as echoes. These echoes are converted to a picture on a screen that the veterinarian can evaluate. Thicker structures create greater echo and appear as white on the screen. Fluid produces virtually no echo and appears as black. Every scale of gray exists in between and that requires the skill of veterinarian to evaluate.



In the early days of ultrasound, machines were cumbersome and expensive and required an extension cord or an elaborate battery system. Because of this, not many veterinarians incorporated the technology into their practice. Today’s ultrasound machines are compact, portable, and can have a rechargeable battery life up to six hours. Most cattle veterinarians now have access to ultrasonography for use on dairy and beef cattle farms.

A veterinarian can determine if a cow is pregnant as early as 25 days after she has been bred by using ultrasound technology (this determination takes about a week longer if the uterus is

examined by hand). At this point, only a small amount of fluid is identifiable within the uterus. It is wise to have the pregnancy checked again sometime after 40 days when the embryo is at least 2 cm long and a heartbeat can be clearly recognized. Twins can also be easily identified using ultrasonography. Knowing that a cow is carrying twins can be very important, as these cows often require extra special care. After 57 days of gestation, the veterinarian can do something with an ultrasound that could never be done before: he or she can determine the gender of the fetus! Locating a bright white structure that will later become the calf's external reproductive organs allows the veterinarian to tell the farmer if his or her cow will be having a bull calf or a heifer calf about seven months later. Having this information allows farmers to make important management decisions and some are just excited to know in advance.

Ultrasound technology can also be a valuable resource if the cow is not pregnant, or "open". The veterinarian can "see" the uterus and ovaries to determine if they are normal. In the event that the uterus and ovaries are not healthy, the veterinarian can then prescribe a course of treatment to make them healthy again. If everything looks okay, but the cow still is not pregnant, the veterinarian can tell the farmer what stage of her cycle the cow is in. This allows the farmer to make some decisions and know how soon his or her cow can be bred again. Remember, a pregnant cow equals a productive cow, in that dairy cows cannot produce milk without having a calf each year, and calves are the future cattle on the farm or ranch. This is why it can be even more important to identify the cows that are open than those that are pregnant.

Even on farms, veterinarians are using the most advanced technologies, such as ultrasound, to help their farmer clients be as efficient and productive as possible and provide the best care available to their cattle.