Worms
Worms are internal parasites, living inside the body rather than on the skin. Worms can cross the placenta and be transferred through mum’s milk. There are many different types of worms that can affect pets, the most common being:

- **Roundworms** - whose eggs can remain infectious in the ground for many years, which is why faeces must be disposed of responsibly and animals should be wormed regularly. Roundworm may also cause problems with other organs such as the lungs. Toxocara canis and Toxocara cati can cause blindness in humans; children and the elderly are especially at risk.

- **Tapeworms**

- **Lungworms** - previously considered a regional problem, however it has now spread across the UK via it’s slug and snail hosts. Untreated, infected dogs can die through lung complications or internal bleeding.

Signs to look out for
Worms in young animals can cause a fatal blockage of the intestines. Worms weaken the immune system and make pets more prone to infections. It is sensible to enter into a flea treatment as fleas can be the intermediary host for tapeworm. Eggs can be found on the pet’s coat so it is important to wash your hands thoroughly after stroking your pet and animals should not be allowed to lick your face.

Common signs of worms include:
- Vomiting (with or without blood)
- Diarrhoea
- Loss of appetite and/or weight loss
- Lethargy and/or stomach pain
- Lungworm sometimes causes coughing or difficulty breathing
- Tapeworms will cause an itchy bottom and tapeworm segments which look like grains of rice can be seen moving around
- Roundworms look like elastic bands and can be several inches in length

Prevention
Worming treatment will only kill worms that are present at the time of worming and will not prevent worms so it is important to treat on a regular basis. Puppies and kittens should be wormed more regularly. Your vet or veterinary nurse will be able to advise you as appropriate.

Please note, treatments for the prevention of Lungworm are only available via your vet.
Getting rid of fleas and worms
No matter how bright and healthy they appear, many cats and dogs often carry invisible and unwanted guests in the form of parasites such as fleas, mites and worms.

Parasites can transmit fatal diseases to pets and are also occasionally responsible for serious conditions such as epilepsy and sight damage in young children or the elderly.

We advise that it is a vital part of responsible pet ownership to ensure parasites are eliminated as soon as you acquire a new pet and that an ongoing preventative care plan is put in place to provide protection against future infestations. Please ask about our Pet Health Club for details on how we can help you to protect your pet and save you money.

Pets pick up parasites both from infected animals (pets and wildlife), as well as from the environments they frequent, please discuss your pets lifestyle with your vet so that they can provide the most appropriate preventative treatments for your pet.

Fleas
Fleas live on the pet’s skin and are therefore called ectoparasites. It is a common misconception that an animal only contracts fleas by coming into contact with another flea ridden animal. This is not correct!

How do animals get fleas?
Fleas don’t tend to jump from one pet to another. When on the pet, fleas lay eggs that are not sticky, which then fall off the animal into the environment. The fleas which hatch out of these eggs then jump on to any passing animal, be it a pet, or a wild animal, or even a human!

Central heating has created a perfect environment for flea breeding and most flea eggs will be found in areas where the pet favours to lie. There are many more eggs, larvae and pupae in the environment (95%) than fleas on a pet (5%). Therefore, it is much easier to prevent flea problems by using an effective flea lifecycle killing product, than to wait until a flea problem arises and then to try to eradicate it.

Signs to look out for
You usually cannot see fleas on your pets coat as they are very good at hiding. Some people will get bitten themselves although the fleas will not live on humans. You may see the presence of flea dirt (droppings) in your pet’s coat or on bedding and your pet may scratch. To determine whether the black specks are flea dirt, comb off onto white wet tissue. Within a few seconds flea dirt will produce a red mark.

Fleas cause your pet to be uncomfortable with itchy skin. Some pets also develop an allergy to flea bites causing severe skin problems and hair loss. A severe flea infestation can also cause anaemia.

Fleas can also carry tapeworm, which the pet will also catch. Only adult fleas live on the pet. The rest of the flea lifecycle is spent living in both your home (carpets, curtains, under furniture) and the outside environment.

Prevention
Fleas can be effectively prevented by using lifecycle flea treatments that can only be prescribed by your vets. Regular treatment is essential to stop the problem from recurring. If your pet has a flea problem, you may need to treat your environment and the problem may take several weeks or even months to eradicate. This does not mean the flea control provided is not working. Both dogs and cats in the household should be treated even if only one animal suffers with a flea-related problem.

Flea treatments for dogs and cats are not the same. You should never give a cat a dog flea treatment or vice versa. In some cases this could actually kill your pet.

Other ectoparasites
There are other external parasite that affect cats and dogs in the UK such as ticks, lice and mites. As with fleas, these cause great distress and discomfort to pets, and can transmit deadly diseases such as Babesiosis. Your vet will take into account your pets lifestyle and regional location to help assess the risk of contact with these parasites when making a recommendation for parasite treatments.

Special consideration is also needed if you and your pet are travelling abroad due to the varying requirements of counties you may wish to enter and exit. Please ask your vet for more information.