

Dog Fleas: The Flea Tapeworm

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Fleas play an essential role in the life cycle of the *Dipylidium caninum* tapeworm, otherwise known as the "flea tapeworm."

The adult *D. caninum* tapeworm lives in an animal's small intestine. As the worm continually grows, individual body segments, each full of eggs, pass in the animal's feces. As the segments dry, they break open and release the eggs. Flea larvae ingest the eggs, which then grow into immature worms inside the fleas. When your pet ingests a flea (usually while grooming), the flea releases the tapeworm, which then grows into an adult in your pet's intestine, completing the life cycle.

The *D. caninum* tapeworm cannot pass directly from cat to cat or dog to dog. Further, an animal cannot become infected simply by eating tapeworm eggs.

To prevent this detrimental life cycle, treat your affected pet with a wormer that kills tapeworms, and use a flea and tick preventive. A non-prescription wormer medication such as [WormXPlus](#) (for dogs only) will kill the tapeworms. Use the wormer along with a proven flea and tick preventive such as [Drs. Foster & Smith Fiprotrol™ Plus Flea & Tick Control for Dogs](#). Continue with the flea and tick preventive even after tapeworms are gone to minimize your pet's risk of becoming re-infected with tapeworms.