Internal Parasites
(Heartworm and Intestinal Worms)

Intestinal Worms

Hookworm
Your dog can get hookworm if it eats infected rats, mongoose or grass and soil. Some puppies are born with the infection.
Your cat can get hookworm by eating infected rats or mongoose.
Hookworms suck blood from your pet's intestines and cause anaemia (lack of blood). This can cause death, especially in young puppies.

People can get hookworm too.

Roundworm
Some puppies and kittens are born with roundworm infection or become infected from their mother when they drink her milk.
Dogs and cats can get roundworm eggs from soil or grass or by eating infected rats or mongoose.
Roundworms will feed on your pets in the intestine and stop them growing well. They will cause a 'pot belly' (a bloated stomach) and diarrhoea and vomiting. Your pet may vomit up the adult worms.
If there are lots of roundworms in your pet they can cause pneumonia (chest infection) or stop the intestines from working properly.

People can get roundworm too.

Tapeworm
These are long flat worms that break into smaller parts. Your dog or cat can get tapeworm by eating infected fleas. Tapeworms live on the nutrients of the food your dog or cat eats.
Tapeworm infection will stop your pet from growing well.

People do not usually get tapeworm.
Whipworm
Whipworm is a small worm that lays eggs around the anus causing ‘scooting’ (rubbing its rear along the ground). This causes gooey, bloody diarrhoea that can continue for a long time. Whipworm is not common in cats.

People cannot get whipworm.

Generally, if cats and dogs have fleas, they will ingest worms if they ingest the fleas. Treat all fleas and worms regularly.

How Do I Prevent Infection With Worms?
Puppies and kittens should be treated with worming tablets or syrup from when they are 2 weeks old.

They should be treated every 2 weeks until they are 12 weeks old and then treated every month afterwards.
**Coccidia**
Coccidial infection is common in Fiji. This tiny single-cell organism infects the intestine (so small you can't see it). It causes diarrhoea which becomes watery and can be bloody too. Young puppies are worst affected and it can cause death. Dogs can get Coccidia from eating oocysts (eggs) in places that have been infected by faecal matter (poo) like soil, bedding or kennels. The vet can give your pet some medicine to treat Coccidia. You should take your dog to the vet if it has bloody diarrhoea or is weak and not eating. You can prevent infection in your puppy by disinfecting the area where your puppy lives.

**Heartworm**
Heartworm is very common in Fiji. The baby worms live in the blood of infected dogs and are spread by mosquito bites. The babies grow into adult worms that live in your dog’s heart and will eventually cause heart and lung problems and death.

![Heartworm Diagram](image)

**How do I know if my dog has Heartworm?**
When your dog first gets sick there may not be any signs. Then a cough will develop and your dog will become less active. Its stomach may also appear bloated.

A simple blood test will show if your dog has Heartworm disease.
How is Heartworm Treated?
Your dog can be treated at the SPCA. It must be admitted to the vet clinic and given 2 injections (24 hours apart) to kill the adult heartworms. If your dog has a very bad infection it may need different treatment and may die even after the treatment. Prevention is the key.

How do I stop my dog getting Heartworm?
You can prevent heartworm infection by giving your dog monthly heartworm prevention medicine or an injection once a year. You should start treatment when your dog is 3 months old and continue it for the rest of its life.

De-worming Products available
- Proheart tablets
- Proheart injection
- Heartgard chews
- Revolution spot-ons
- Monthly oral ivermectin
- Allworming tablets
You can buy these or similar products from SPCA.

WARNING: Do not start heartworm prevention without testing if your dog has heartworm first. If your dog has heartworm and you start them on preventative treatment instead of curative, it is potentially fatal.