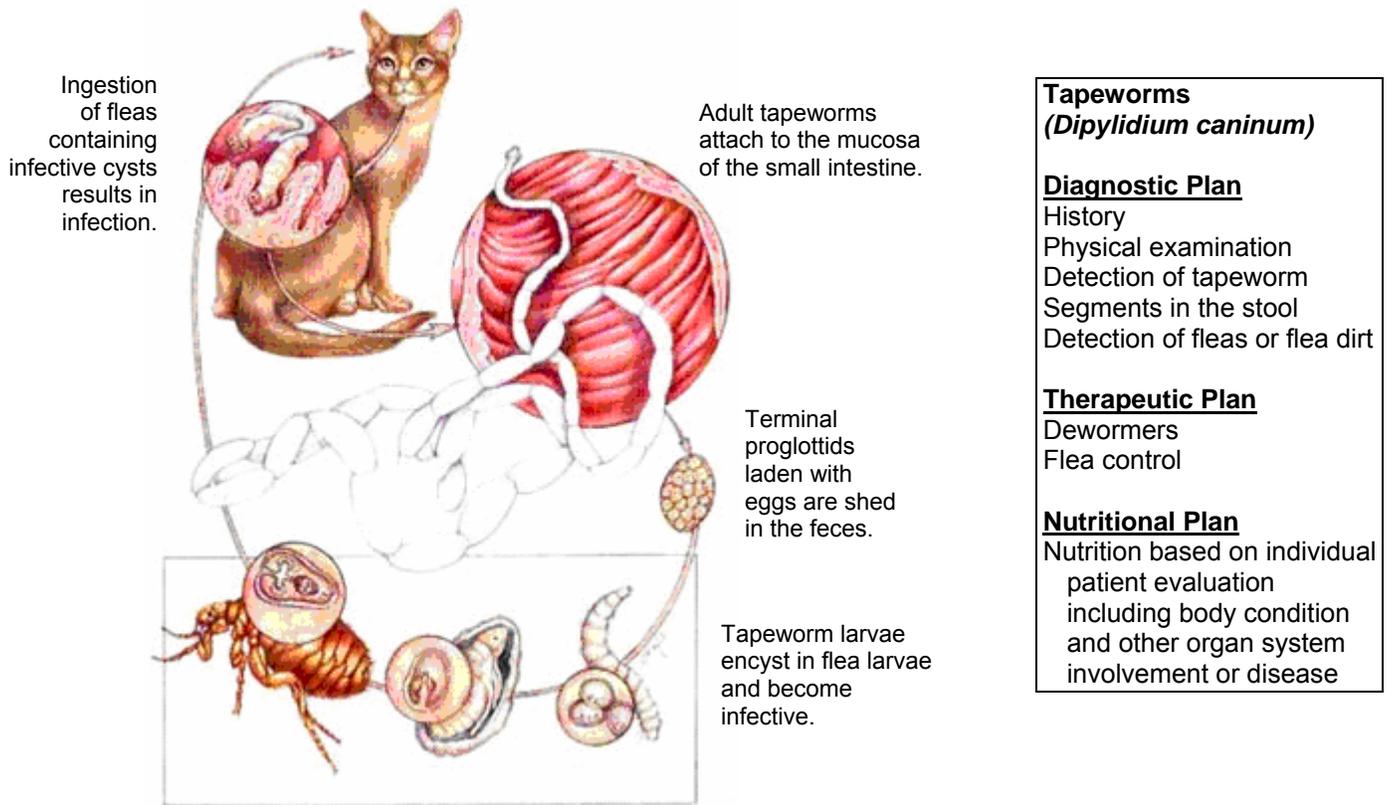


Tapeworms (*Dipylidium caninum*)



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Your pet has *Dipylidium caninum* tapeworms. These tapeworms are common parasites found in the small intestines of dogs and cats. Dewormers are highly effective against *D. caninum* tapeworms, but reinfection will occur unless fleas, which participate in the tapeworm life cycle, are also controlled. This client education sheet will help you learn more about these tapeworms and will review your veterinarian's instructions for your pet's care at home, as well as follow-up with the veterinary health care team.

What You Should Know About Tapeworms (*Dipylidium caninum*)

Adult *Dipylidium caninum* (dip'y-lid'e-um ka-ni'num) tapeworms attach to the lining of the small intestine in dogs and cats. There they may reach a length of several inches. The body of these tapeworms is composed of segments called proglottids. As proglottids mature, they fill with tapeworm eggs, detach from the rest of the tapeworm, and crawl out of the pet's body through the anus or leave the body in the stool. Immature fleas (larvae) in the pet's bedding and outdoors are attracted to and eat the proglottids and thus the tapeworm eggs. Tapeworm eggs hatch and develop in flea larvae. Pets acquire tapeworms when they nip at their fleas and accidentally eat a flea containing an infective tapeworm. Two or three weeks later, this tapeworm begins to shed proglottids.

People, especially children, may serve as accidental hosts for *D. caninum* tapeworms. Infection occurs when infective fleas are accidentally eaten.

Signs

Dipylidium caninum tapeworms usually do not cause clinical signs unless the tapeworms are present in large numbers. Diarrhea may occur in these situations. Proglottids passing through the rectum may cause an irritation which in turn causes the dog to drag its bottom (scoot) on the ground or floor.

Diagnosis

Dipylidium caninum infections are diagnosed when your veterinarian finds fresh white proglottids shaped like cucumber seeds in a pet's stool or on the coat near the anus. You may also find proglottids on your pet, in its stool or in its bedding.

Fresh proglottids can crawl about slowly. Dried proglottids may also be found on a pet's coat, in the pet's bedding or on carpets and floors. Tapeworm eggs may be found in stool samples. But animals may have D. caninum infections and still have no eggs in their stools.

Flea infestation is a clue that D. caninum may be present.

Treatment and Home Care

Dewormers designed to eliminate D. caninum tapeworms are extremely effective, but unless measures are taken to eliminate fleas from the animal and its environment, reinfection may occur within a month. Your veterinarian can recommend effective flea-control programs for your area.

Frequent vacuuming can help remove flea eggs, larvae and tapeworm segments. Vacuum bags should be disposed of immediately. The pet's bedding should be cleaned thoroughly. Floor coverings where the pet lies should be vacuumed or disinfected. The animal itself should be bathed regularly to remove dried proglottids.

Fleas and tapeworms are so commonplace that one animal in a household with a tapeworm infection may indicate that other pets are similarly infected and need treatment.

Nutritional Plan

After your pet's recovery from D. caninum infection is complete, your veterinarian may suggest a dietary change based on your pet's age and body condition, and on the presence or absence of disease in other organs and body systems. Optimal nutrition should provide for a pet's needs during each stage of its life. Optimal nutrition should also reduce the health risks associated with feeding excess sodium, phosphorus, calcium, protein and fat. Foods that avoid these harmful excesses and provide proper nutrition for each life stage include Hill's® Science Diet® brand pet foods.

Transitioning Food

Unless recommended otherwise by your veterinarian, gradually introduce any new food over a seven-day period. Mix the new food with your pet's former food, gradually increasing its proportion until only the new food is fed.

If your pet is one of the few that doesn't readily accept a new food, try warming the canned food to body temperature, hand feeding for the first few days, or mixing the dry food with warm water (wait ten minutes before serving). Feed only the recommended food. Be patient but firm with your pet. This is important because the success or failure of treatment depends to a large degree on strict adherence to the new food.

Presented as an educational service by



Home Care Instructions

Client's Name: _____

Patient's Name: _____

Medication(s): _____

Nutritional Recommendation: _____

Follow-Up Appointment: _____

(Hospital Stamp Area Above)

REGULAR VISITS WILL HELP OUR VETERINARY HEALTH CARE TEAM PROVIDE FOR YOUR PET'S BEST INTEREST.