

Your handy guide to common pests

Do you know which parasites are most likely to affect your puppy? Learn more about where to spot them, the threats they pose, and how you can prevent them



1. Fleas

Tiny, brown-black adult fleas feed by sucking your puppy's blood, and usually hide out in spots such as the groin, under the front legs or behind the ears. A heavy infestation can lead to serious skin problems.

Fleas are usually easy to spot: simply groom your puppy gently with a fine-toothed comb over a moist, white kitchen towel. If reddish-brown dots drop from the comb onto the towel, your little dog is likely to have fleas (these dots are fleas' faeces).

Your vet can advise you on a safe and effective treatment. You will also need to spray and vacuum your house thoroughly to prevent fleas coming back.

Prevention is much easier than dealing with an established infestation, so make sure all pets in the household are regularly dosed with a good-quality flea treatment.



2. Ticks

Blood-sucking ticks can attach themselves to your puppy's skin. Look out for them under the tail, between the toes, under the front legs, in the groin area, or even on eyelids. It's important to remove ticks promptly as they can cause an abscess and pass on diseases. Removing ticks is best done with a tick-removing tool; otherwise the head can remain embedded in your puppy's skin. Your vet can help with this, and recommend a preventative treatment.



3. Mites

These tiny parasites are usually spread by direct contact with the skin. Watch out for vigorous scratching and scaly, flaking or inflamed skin.

Washing bedding and grooming equipment regularly can help prevent the spread of mites. If you suspect an infestation, your vet can easily prescribe your puppy an insecticidal spot-on treatment.



4. Lice

Lice are very small parasites, but can usually be seen by the human eye. Watch out for little white dots among your puppy's hair, too – these are lice eggs. You will probably also notice your pet scratching intensely, and his or her coat may look dry and patchy. The simplest and most effective treatments come in the form of 'spot-on' drops – ask your vet for advice as some infestations will require more than one treatment.



5. Worms

Every puppy is susceptible to worms, which are passed from their mother through the milk or placenta. Most worms make their home in your dog's intestinal tract. The most common types include:

- Roundworms** Found in the gut, they can cause irritation and diarrhoea. You might also see your puppy rubbing its bottom on the floor or ground.
- Lungworms** Live in the respiratory tract and can be serious. Dogs that eat slugs and chew grass are susceptible.
- Hookworms** Can be dangerous, as they steal nutrients from your puppy and lead to anaemia, or spread to the lungs in heavy infestations.

You won't normally be able to spot an adult worm, but you might notice symptoms that could point to them – such as diarrhoea, dry, coarse fur and weight loss. Worm-related disease can pose a risk to humans, especially children, so prompt treatment is vital. Prevention is key, so your puppy should be receiving monthly worming. At six months old, they'll then be ready to move to the adult regime of a treatment every three months.



Remember...

If you suspect that your puppy has any of these parasites, speak to your vet straight away. They'll be able to recommend the best course of treatment and ensure your pet isn't suffering from any nasty side effects, such as skin infections