

Your handy guide to common pests

Do you know which parasites are most likely to affect your kitten? 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 from your kitten by sucking blood, and usually hide out in spots such as the groin, under the front legs or behind the ears. Fleas are usually easy to spot: simply groom your kitten 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 cat is likely to have fleas (these dots are fleas' faeces).

You'll also notice your pet scratching, as many cats are allergic to flea saliva, suffering from itching, skin inflammation, and small scabs. Your vet can recommend an effective treatment, but you'll also need to spray and vacuum your house thoroughly to prevent fleas coming back.

Prevention is far easier than dealing with an established infestation, so ensure all your pets are regularly dosed with a good-quality flea treatment.



2. Ticks

Ticks are blood-sucking parasites that attach themselves to your kitten'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 pass on unwanted disease and may cause an allergic reaction where they attach.

Removing ticks safely is harder than it sounds, and is best done with a tick-removing tool. Otherwise the head can remain embedded in your kitten's skin. Your vet can help you with this and recommend a preventative product.



3. Mites

Ear mites are spread by direct contact with another cat, or via infected bedding.

Mites irritate the inside of a cat's ear, so if your kitten flicks his or her ears frequently or has a lot of earwax, they may be suffering from ear mites.

If you're concerned, then take your kitten to see the vet, as he or she can treat and control mite infestations.



4. Worms

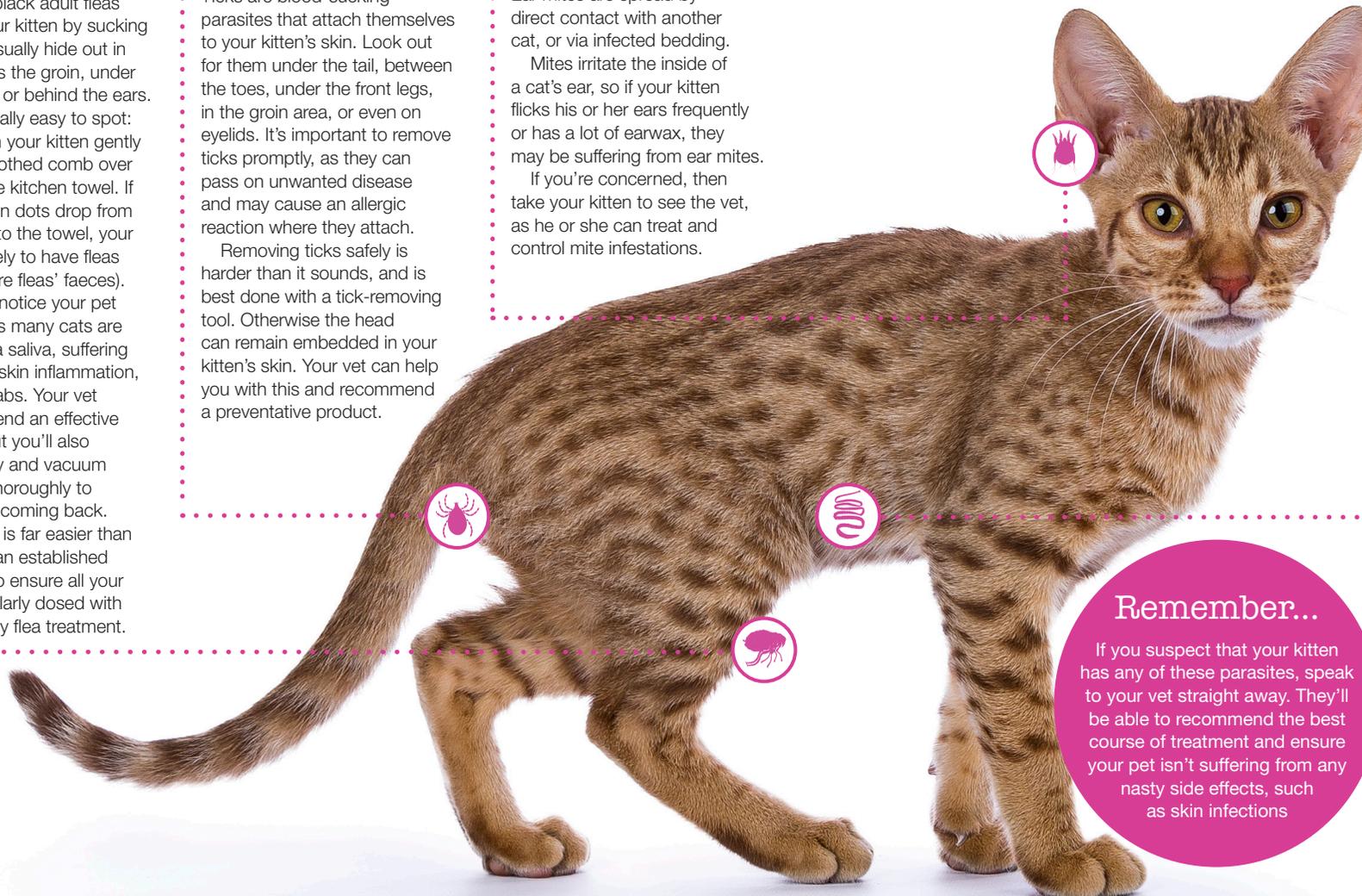
Most worms make their home in your kitten's intestinal tract. The most common types include:

Roundworms Very common in kittens, as they can be transferred via the mother cat's milk.

Hookworms A type of roundworm, these small worms are transferred via contaminated water or soil, and can be dangerous to young animals.

Tapeworms Tapeworm eggs are passed to kittens via fleas and vermin they have eaten.

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 to children, so prompt treatment is key. However, many cats don't show any outward signs, so regular preventative treatment is best. From six weeks old, cats need deworming against roundworms (including hookworms) monthly. And from six months old, treatment for roundworms and tapeworms is required every three months.



Remember...

If you suspect that your kitten 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