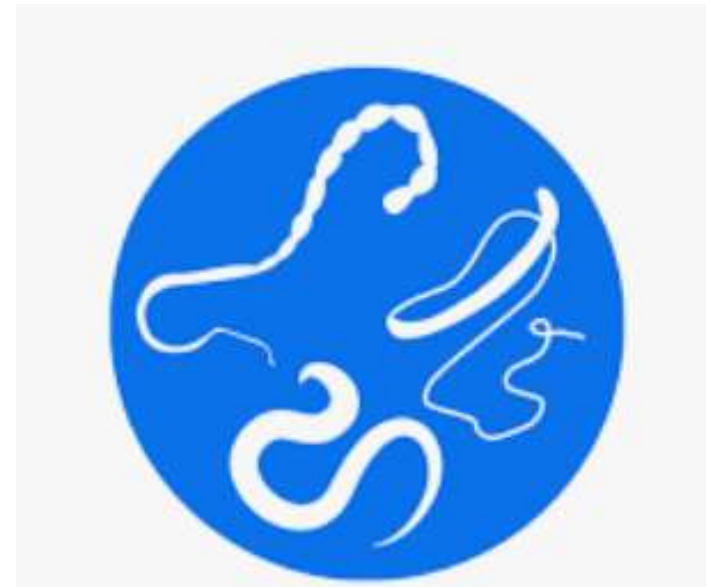


Stool as a tool: The practical use of faecal testing



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Bishopton Veterinary Group

Disclosure

- **This session is sponsored by IDEXX with an honorarium provided**
- **Bishopton Veterinary Group collaborated with VetDx to support in the design of the Parachex risk assessment tool**
- **The opinions expressed within this presentation are my own**

Anything else to declare.....?

- I am not a Parasitologist!**
- I am a first opinion practitioner like many of you**
- I would like to share an account of how we have tackled an emerging challenge. I hope that by sharing our story it might help others in their approach to the use of faecal sampling as a foundation for risk based parasiticide dispensing .**

15 Years ago.....

And then.....

Prescribing Parasiticides Responsibly

Parasites, prescribing, and our planet: rethinking parasiticides in the One Health era

Responsible use of parasiticides: finding a balance

Broads warns of potential impact of flea treatments



CHARLOTTE YOUNG PHOTOGRAPH/GETTY

Swimming is just one of the ways the harmful chemicals can enter waterways

Songbirds being killed by pesticides found in pet fur flea treatments

Exclusive: Chemical in treatment for pet fleas and ticks is found in nests of blue and great tits, killing chicks



Responsible use of parasiticides for cats and dogs: the 5-point plan

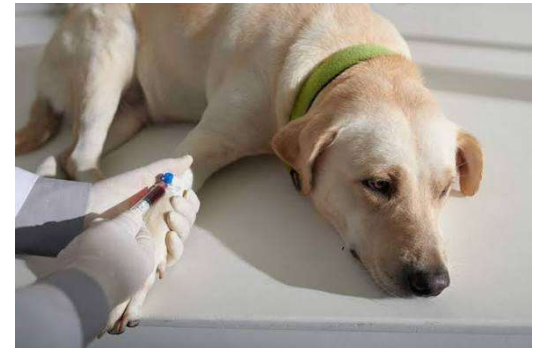
- 1 Work with clients to prevent and check for parasites**
 - Provide regular health checks and provide clear information on all practical ways to prevent animals getting parasites
 - Demonstrate how to check for common parasites such as ticks and flea, and where relevant explain the symptoms of other parasites such as intestinal worms, mites and lungworm
 - Inform dog owners of the risks associated with dog fouling and remind them to always pick up faeces and dispose of responsibly
- 2 Understand the potential risks to animals, humans, and the environment**
 - Maintain an up-to-date knowledge of veterinary parasitology and the possible risks to animal and human health from the parasites you treat
 - Know how parasiticides work and familiarise yourself with their safety data sheet/product SPCs
 - Be aware of the potential harm parasiticide products may cause to natural invertebrate populations and the wider ecosystem
 - Make sure you advise clients of the risks and benefits for the parasiticides you prescribe
- 3 Take a risk-based approach to prescribing**
 - Ask your client about relevant lifestyle factors, such as walks, indoor vs outdoor cat, travel, presence of other household pets, and about household members, including children, the elderly and those who are pregnant or immunocompromised
 - Consider local parasite risks where possible
 - Consider the benefits and limitations of faecal testing or serology to improve surveillance for local disease risks and better understand how to treat the individual animal
 - Avoid a blanket approach, tailor products and frequency to the animal's needs and level of risk
 - Target treatment to the parasite, using narrow spectrum parasiticides where appropriate
 - Choose the most appropriate formulation for the animal and owner eg, where possible, do not use a topical product for a dog that frequently swims
- 4 Ensure appropriate use**
 - Discuss mode and frequency of application with the client and select a product that is likely to encourage best compliance for that client and pet. Discuss and factor in owner wishes regarding format and frequency to improve compliance. Don't assume all clients find the same mode and frequency of administration easy
 - Advise clients on correct administration, storage and disposal of products and packaging, and administer products for clients as necessary
 - Explain that inappropriate use or disposal can affect user safety, reduce efficacy and increase the risk of polluting the environment
 - Advise clients on grooming, bathing and swimming precautions after topical treatment. Where possible, do not use topical products for animals that need to be bathed frequently or swim regularly
- 5 Record and monitor use**
 - Ensure individual vets are empowered to make risk-based decisions with their clients
 - Be able to justify your choice of parasiticide and treatment regime
 - Keep accurate records of treatment and outcomes to help evaluate therapeutic regimens
 - Regularly assess your practice parasiticide use and develop written protocols for appropriate use
 - Report any concerns, including of suspected resistance, to the manufacturers and through the Suspected Adverse Reaction Surveillance Scheme (SARS)

Parasiticide products are important for the treatment and prevention of many parasites, which can pose risks to both animals and humans. Every use leads to follow correct administration and disposal guidelines to minimise risk of environmental contamination and select the most effective product. Responsible use optimises the benefits to both animals and humans while minimising the risks. Always take a risk-based and targeted approach to treatment and think 'One Health' to factor in risks and benefits to animals, humans, and the environment.

“A practice must be able to demonstrate that when using ectoparasiticides, it does so responsibly, and is accountable for the choices made in such use”

Testing Before Treating

- **We culture before dispensing antibiotics**
- **We are able to titre test before vaccination**
- **Why not faecal test before dispensing parasiticides?**



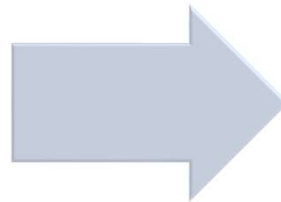


- **European Scientific Counsel Companion Animal Parasites (ESCCAP) Guidelines:**
- Veterinarians should, wherever appropriate, utilise diagnostic tests to establish parasite infection status in order to provide the best possible advice

1 Worm Control
in Dogs and Cats

How to get from A to B?

Year round
parasiticide treatment
embedded in a direct
debit health plan



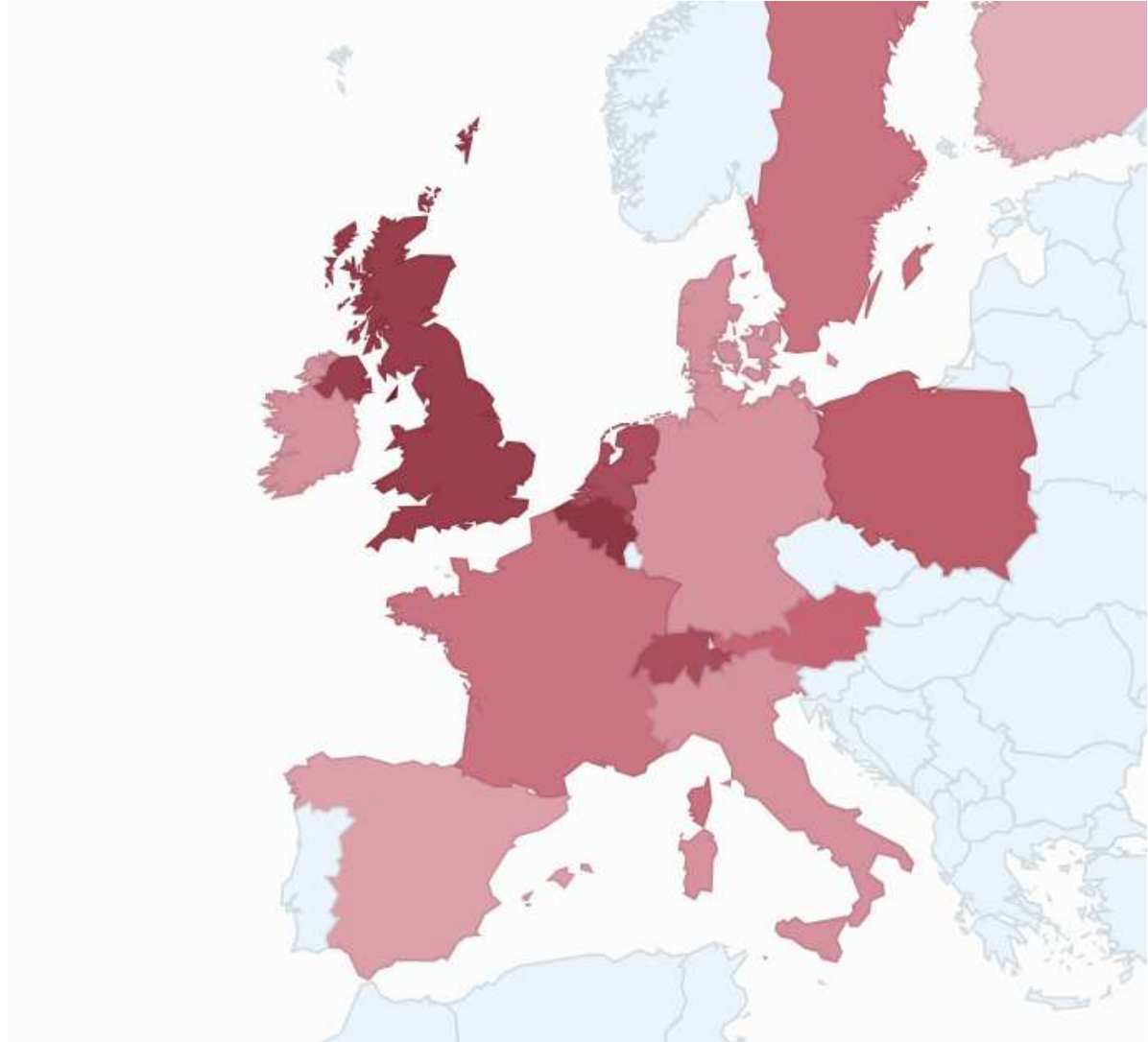
Responsible risk
assessed parasiticide
dispensing and
treatment

Potential Barriers

- Risk
- Accuracy of testing
- Cost
- Time and workflow
- Client understanding of need
- Getting started

Is there a **REAL** risk?

- Prevalence of infection with potentially zoonotic intestinal helminths remains high across Europe
- ESSCAP map shows 13% rate of positive test results
In the UK

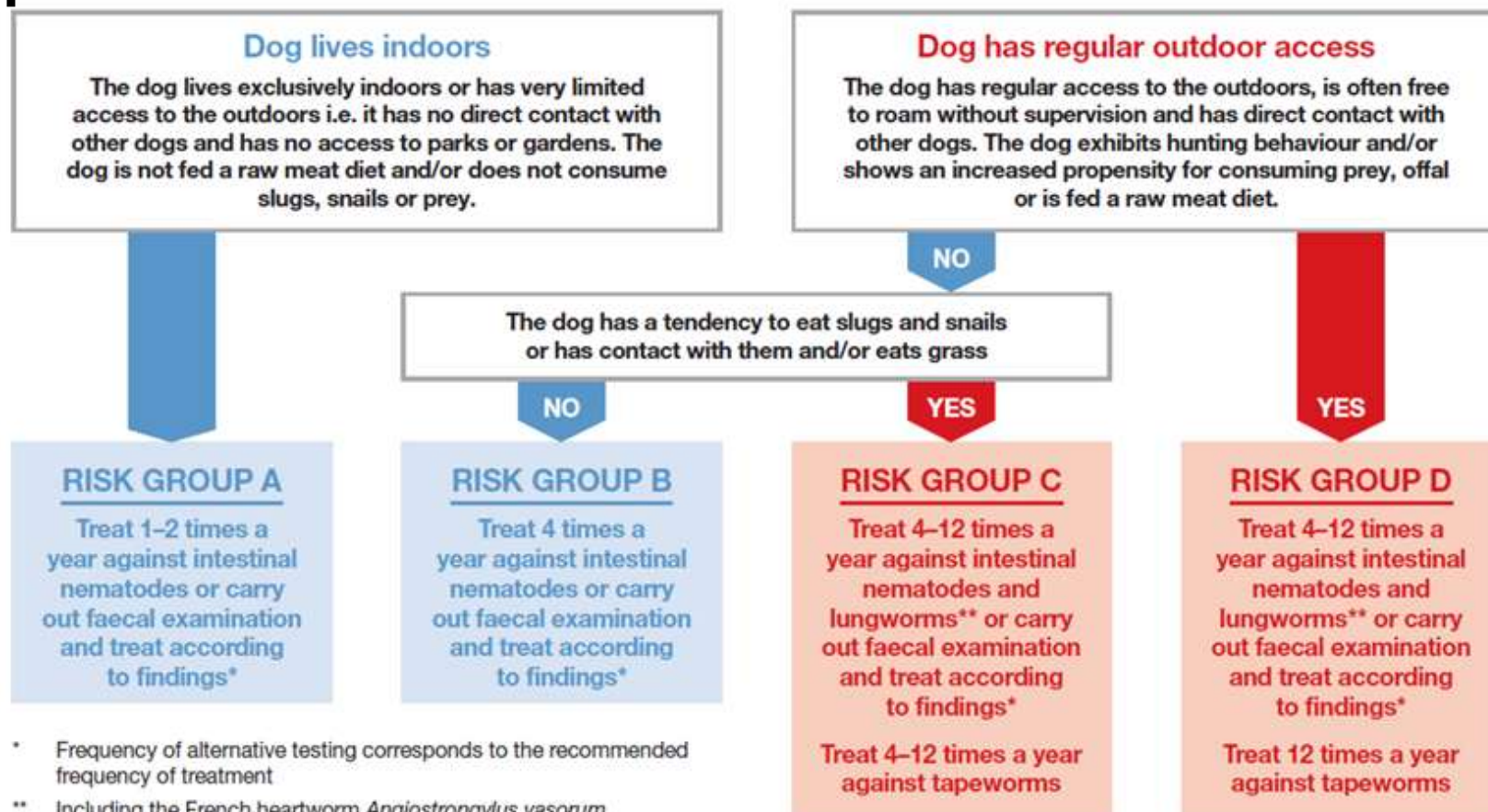


Dog-Walk Study Key Findings:

- Faecal samples of 2469 dogs visiting 164 parks in 33 cities across 12 European countries were examined
- At least one intestinal parasite was detected in 589 (23.9%) faecal samples.
- Overall, 7.6% of all dogs tested positive for a nematode infection
- 62.7% of owners failed to follow recommended treatment frequency.
- We may assume risk is low, but when we test, we often find disease, including in the UK

Therefore, the control of helminth infections in domestic dogs and cats continues to be a challenge for veterinarians and pet owner

ESSCAP guidelines create a framework which can be used to translate an assessment of risk into a practical approach



Cat lives indoors

The cat lives exclusively indoors or only has access to a fenced-in patio or garden. The cat is unlikely to eat rodents or other prey.

RISK GROUP A

Treat 1–2 times a year against intestinal nematodes or carry out faecal examination and treat according to findings

Cat is free to roam

The cat has unrestricted access to the outdoors and has direct contact with other cats. Hunting behaviour and the potential ingestion of rodents or other prey cannot be ruled out.

RISK GROUP B

Treat 4–12 times a year against intestinal nematodes or carry out faecal examination and treat according to findings
Treat 4–12 times a year against tapeworms

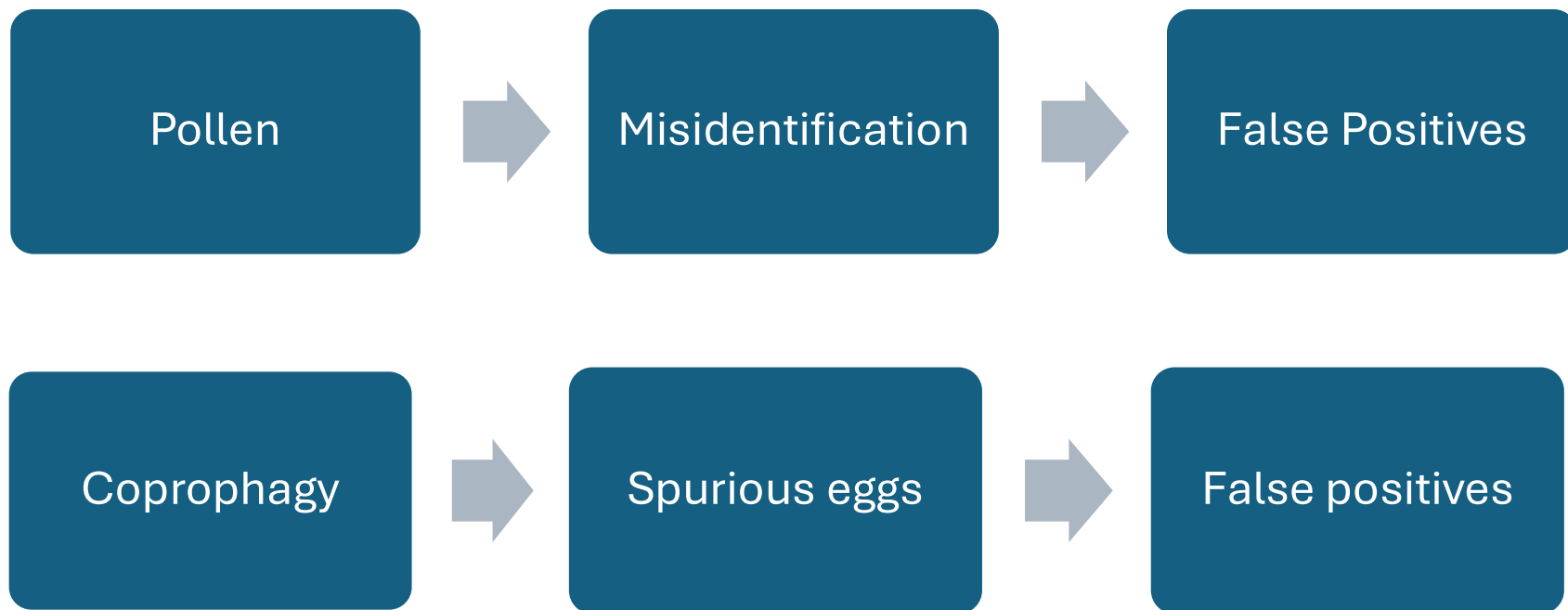
‘For intestinal nematodes and lungworms, faecal testing (eventually with subsequent deworming) can be an alternative to standard deworming advice if performed at the same frequency as the suggested Treatments’

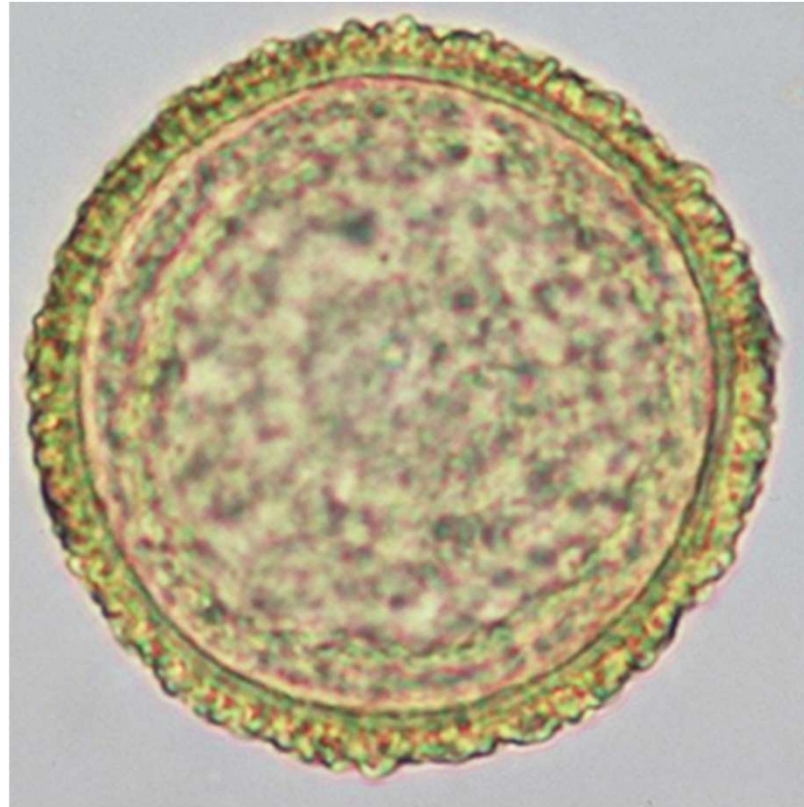
- **Which Faecal Test?**

- Direct Smears
- Faecal Flotation with or without centrifugation
- Faecal antigen testing



Current methods for detection can give false positives and negatives





Prepatent
period



Clinical signs
before eggs
are shed



False
Negative

Intermittent
egg shedding



Single sample
could miss
infection



False
Negative

We have chosen Faecal antigen testing +/- Baermanns lungworm testing:

- **Accuracy**
 - Detects earlier (during prepatent period)
 - Not affected by intermittent egg shedding
 - Avoids false positives as a result of coprophagy
 - Test interpreted and reported by accredited lab partner
- **Convenience**
 - Small sample size required
 - No need for pooled samples
 - Able to post out to client with direct return to lab with results accessible on PMS and lab online portal

ESCCAP 2025 Update:

‘It is recognized that the adding of coproantigen testing would higher specificity after coprophagy and higher the sensitivity during prepatency (nematodes) as compared to egg-based methods’

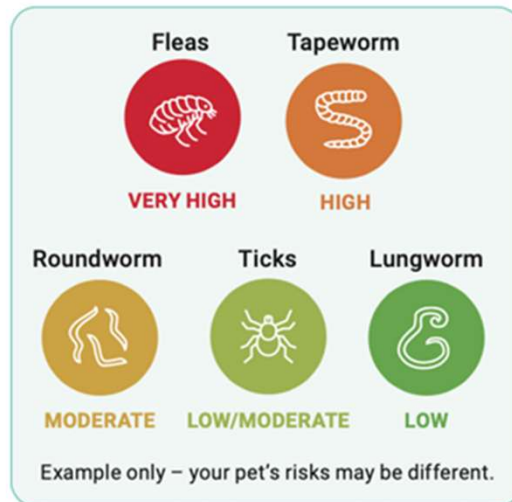
Faecal antigen
testing +/-
Baermanns
Lungworm

+

Understanding your **pet's report**

Your vet will share a Parachex™ Risk Report, which shows your pet's unique parasite risks. We use a traffic-light system to make things simple:

-  **VERY HIGH / HIGH** – Your pet is at significant risk. Treatment and/or testing is strongly recommended.
-  **MODERATE** – Some risk exists. Your vet may recommend treatment, monitoring, or seasonal protection.
-  **LOW/MODERATE** – Minimal risk. Regular monitoring or occasional treatment and/or testing may be all that's needed.





The questionnaire is complete. Here is a summary based on your answers.

Answers

Question 1

Is your dog over 6 months old?

Yes
v

Question 2

The risk of picking up roundworm eggs and other parasites from the environment increases with the amount of time your dog spends playing in or exploring the great outdoors. Does your dog regularly go outdoors with access to public spaces? e.g. parks, footpaths, beaches. Click 'no' if your dog does not spend a lot of time outdoors and rarely visits public spaces OR if your dog only has access to your garden.

Yes
v

Question 3

Fleas can readily jump from pet-to-pet and can also transmit flea tapeworm when they do. Does your dog live with another pet e.g. cat, rabbit, another dog, OR do they have regular contact with other pets e.g. at park or in doggy day care.

Yes
v

Question 4

Has your dog ever had a tick or does he/she have access to grassland, woodland, heathland, moorland or areas where deer roam? These are all areas where ticks like to live.

Yes
v

Question 5

Lungworm is a potentially deadly parasite which lives in slugs and snails. The prevalence of lungworm varies depending on where you live. Do you and your dog live in Yorkshire?

Summary

Owner	Ian McClive
Assessment date	13 May 2026, 18:35
Pet's name	Olive
Breed	Labrador Retriever
Pet's date of birth	16 Feb 2012
Pet's age	14yrs 3mths
Pet's weight	30 kg

Parasite risk profile for your dog

The parasite risk results produced today are based on the information you have provided by answering the Parachex™ questionnaire. Should your, or your pet's circumstances/lifestyle change within the next 12-months, you should contact your vet to discuss IF this affects your pet's parasite risk results. For example, if you were to change your pet's diet to a raw meat diet, or if you were to move house.

The Parachex™ parasite risk assessment and results have been formulated following ESCCAP guidelines: Worm Control in Dogs and Cats, Sixth Edition - May 2021.

Fleas

VERY HIGH



VERY HIGH

Fleas can readily jump from pet-to-pet and can spread flea tapeworm. An adult flea can lay up to 50 eggs per day and 90% of the flea lifecycle occurs in the environment and not on your pet.

Ticks

HIGH



HIGH

Ticks are blood sucking parasites that can cause localised irritation and spread disease.

live. Do you and your dog live in Yorkshire?

Yes



Question 6

Does your dog have access to areas with slugs or snails? OR do any of the following:

- Lick areas where slugs/snails have been
- Show interest in slugs and snail
- Drink from a puddle or outdoor water bowl
- Play with toys left outside
- Eat or chew on grass

OR There are foxes in my area.

Yes



Question 7

Dogs can get certain types of tapeworm from eating raw meat.

Do you feed your dog a raw meat diet or offal?

Yes



Question 8

Raw meat diets that are processed and pre-frozen reduce the risk of parasite transmission. Is the raw meat diet you feed your dog processed and pre-frozen. Click 'no' if you are uncertain.

No



Question 9

Young, immunocompromised and pregnant individuals are at increased risk of infection with roundworm and flea/tick-borne infections. Does your dog share their home with children under 5, immunocompromised or pregnant individuals?

Yes

Roundworm



HIGH

HIGH

There are several different species of roundworm. Roundworm eggs are found in the environment, typically soil. A recent study found that 86.6% of parks tested positive for the parasite*.

**Airs PM, Brown C, Gardiner E, Maciag L, Adams JP, Morgan ER. WormWatch: Park soil surveillance reveals extensive Toxocara contamination across the UK and Ireland.*

Vet Rec. 2023 Jan;192(1):e2341. doi: 10.1002/vetr.2341. Epub 2022 Nov 9. PMID: 36352759.

Tapeworm



VERY HIGH

VERY HIGH

Flea tapeworm are primarily spread by ingesting tapeworm infected fleas, but other tapeworms can be contracted by eating raw or undercooked meat. Tapeworm segments can sometimes be seen in a dog's faeces.

Lungworm



LOW TO MODERATE

LOW-MODERATE

Lungworm is a potentially lethal parasite that dogs contract by eating infected slugs and snails. They can also accidentally ingest snails when chewing grass, playing with toys left outdoors or drinking from puddles. Lungworm is more common in areas with foxes, as foxes play an important role in the lungworm lifecycle and pass lungworm larvae in their faeces.

Human Health Risk



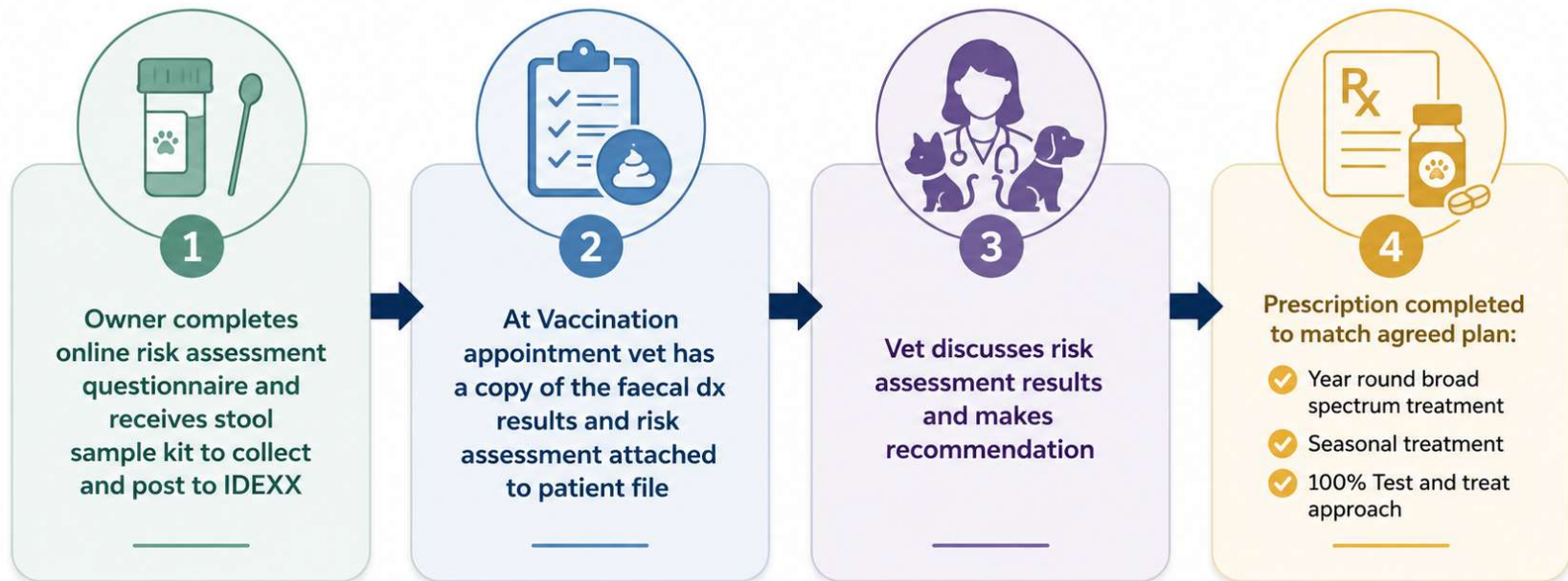
UNKNOWN

Children under 5 years of age, immunocompromised and pregnant individuals have an increased risk of infection with roundworm and certain diseases which can be carried by fleas and ticks. Your vet will take this into consideration and adjust your dog's parasite treatment protocol accordingly.

Download or print PDF

Email me the results

Responsible Parasiticide Dispensing Process



Better decisions. Healthier pets. Healthier people. Healthier planet.





Complete parasite risk questionnaire



Discuss results with our team



We design a bespoke 12 month parasite prevention plan, tailored for your pet's lifestyle



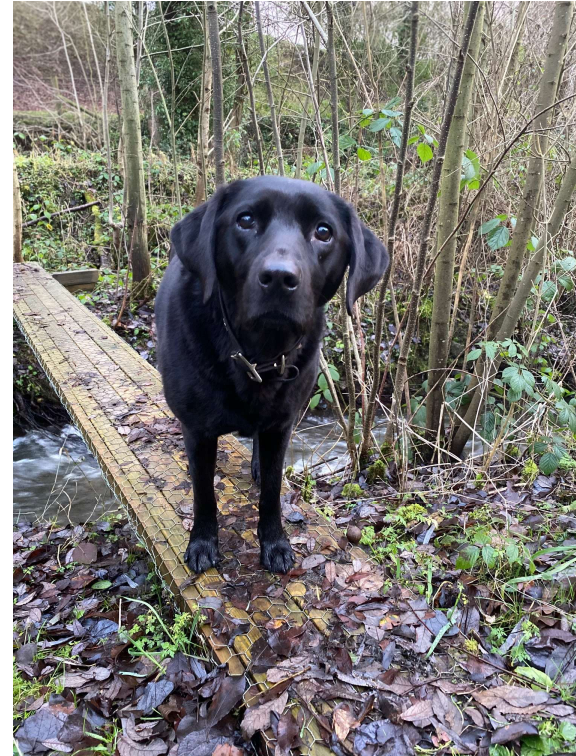
You and your pet enjoy time together protected from parasites



We reassess your risk level every year to ensure you're always protected

Case 1- High Risk

Active outdoor dog who mixes with other dogs in parks, scavenges carcasses, eats slugs and snails and lives with two children under the age of five years



**If risk of tapeworm
is VERY HIGH OR
risk of lungworm is
HIGH or VERY HIGH**



Monthly year round
treatment with
broad spectrum
wormer

Discuss
recommendation
with owner



Prepare
prescription



Apply code to
patient record

Case 2- Moderate Risk

Largely a lap dog who does not scavenge and doesn't eat snails

She roams around on the owner's land and does not live with young children or any immunocompromised humans



Risk of roundworm OR
tapeworm OR lungworm
MODERATE or above



Test for roundworm, tapeworm
and lungworm q3mths
OR
Worming treatment every 3
mths

Case 3- Low Risk

Indoor lap cat, lives with no other animals, children or immuno-compromised humans



**Risk of ALL WORMS
is LOW or LOW-
MODERATE:**



Test for roundworms
q6mths OR worming
treatment q 6mths

**N.B. IF IMMUNOCOMPROMISED HOUSEHOLD increase
frequency of testing/treatment to q 3 months**

What about Lungworm?

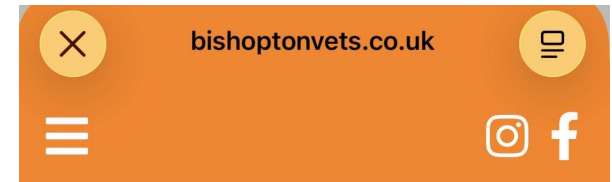
- We are fortunate to live in a very low risk lungworm area
- We include Baermanns testing up to three monthly according to risk
- We advise clients of increased risk when travelling
- High proportion of our clients are higher risk categories for other parasite groups and so lungworm risk becomes mitigated by treatment approach
- Careful conversation when reduce frequency of treatments

Cost and Time

- One price for dogs and one price for cats
- All plans provide same risk based parasiticide dispensing approach
- The clients have to complete their risk assessment prior to coming into the consult room



Challenges



Our bespoke, risk-based parasite plans

Parasite control: Our unique approach to protecting your pet, your family and our environment

Every pet is different – what they eat, where they go and what they do – so why should they be treated the same way?

All of the plans in our relaunched Lifetime Care Club include a bespoke, risk-based parasite control plan for your pet, using the latest diagnostic advances and tailored by our decades of experience of living and working in this unique and beautiful location of North Yorkshire.

With increasing evidence emerging about the development of drug-resistant parasites and the harmful effects of some treatments on our ecosystem, we have thought about how to best protect your pet's health and the environment.

Search for a pet

Questionnaire

[Home](#) > [Purdy](#) > Cat Parasite Risk Assessment

Cat Parasite Risk Assessment

Purdy

Answers

Question 1

Is your cat over 6 months old?

Yes



Question 2

Does your cat go outdoors? Click 'no' if your cat is indoors only.

No



Question 3

Fleas can readily jump from pet-to-pet and can also transmit flea tapeworm when they do. Does your cat live with another pet that spends time outdoors?

No



Question 4

During the next 12 months, is it likely your cat will stay in a cattery, another household with pets or visit a cat show?

Yes



Question 5

Cats can get certain types of tapeworm from eating raw meat. Do you feed your cat a raw meat diet?

No



Summary

Owner	Andrew Lawton
Assessment date	29 Jan 2026, 09:32
Pet's name	Purdy
Breed	Domestic Shorthair (Moggy)
Pet's date of birth	02 Jul 2017

Cat Parasite Risk Assessment

The parasite risk results produced today are based on the information you have provided by answering the Parachex™ questionnaire. Should your, or your pet's circumstances/lifestyle change within the next 12-months, you should contact your vet to discuss IF this affects your pet's parasite risk results. For example, if you were to change your pet's diet to a raw meat diet, or if you were to move house.

The Parachex™ parasite risk assessment and results have been formulated following ESCCAP guidelines: Worm Control in Dogs and Cats, Sixth Edition - May 2021.

Fleas LOW-MODERATE



LOW
MODERATE

Fleas can readily jump from pet-to-pet and can spread flea tapeworm. An adult flea can lay up to 50 eggs per day and 90% of the flea lifecycle occurs in the environment and not on your pet.

Ticks

LOW



LOW

Ticks are blood sucking parasites that can cause localised irritation and spread disease.

What about non health plan pets?

- Once yearly faecal antigen testing offered at time of vaccination and risk assessment- owner pays for it at the time
- Pets of all ages coming in for six-month health checks are offered a preventative screen package which includes a faecal antigen test

Summary

- Shift from blanket treatment to risk-based prescribing can support animal health, human health and environmental health
- Without faecal sampling, decisions are often based on assumptions- Stool sampling is the tool that unlocks the conversation and opportunity to dispense parasiticides responsibly
- Faecal antigen testing combined with a risk assessment tool provides a way to deliver good medicine with a workflow that is time efficient, practical and achievable in first opinion practice
- Helps maintain a sustainable and viable general practice model
- Client expectations and behaviours are evolving

Implement regular faecal sampling to get ahead of your clients, be proactive and generate sustainable income for your practice

Any Questions?

