WHY MY CAT HAS TAPEWORMS?

Cestodes (tapeworms) are common intestinal parasites of cats. The majority of tapeworm infections in cats are caused by *Dypilidium caninum* and *Taenia taeniaeformis*.

Your cat has to ingest an intermediate host that is fleas or rodents to acquire a tapeworm infection:

1) **By eating fleas**: Fleas can acquire tapeworms by eating tapeworm eggs in the environment. Your cat on the other hand ingests fleas during normal grooming. If the flea contains an immature *D. Caninum*, it will emerge from the flea and develops in the small intestine of your cat. As the tapeworms develop, it will produce after 2-3 weeks body segments called proglottids that will be passed in the feces. You may see dried, white to cream colored segments, or pieces of tapeworm in your cat’s feces or stuck to the fur under the tail (fig.1)

![Fig.1 Dry segments of tapeworms around the anus of a cat. Picture: C. Senay dvm](image)

2) **By eating a rodent**: Your cat can also acquire tapeworm by ingesting an infected rodent containing *Taenia taeniaeformis*. This tapeworm will develop in the small intestine of your cat and will reach patency in 5–12 weeks with proglottid production lasting as long as 34 months. Please note that *Taenia taeniaeformis* can also be acquired by your cat by eating uncooked meat, raw freshwater fish, or discarded animal parts.

**How to prevent?** In addition to monthly flea prevention, your cat should receive a deworming medication that targets tapeworms. The recommended protocol is to treat at least every 2 months, and every month if your cat is a regular hunter and eats its preys.


If you have question regarding this chronicle, do not hesitate to communicate with us!
Clinique Vétérinaire Vaudreuil inc.

By C. Senay dvm September 2015