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This issue dedicated to Miss Sassy & Jack Berry
and Stinky Karpp

DEWORMING

This focuses on the parasitic worm *Ascaris*, which can be found mainly in herbivores. Infection occurs following the ingestion of the eggs either from the food, feces or the soil. In the small intestine, the larvae migrate through the intestinal wall, to the lungs, where they can result in lung inflammation and fluid retention. Approximately 10 days later, the larvae pass from the respiratory passages into the digestive tract and mature into egg producing worms. These grow to a length of 6 to 16 inches in the small intestine. Serious complications, even death, can result from the infiltration of the larvae into sensitive tissues, such as the brain. The migration of the adult worms can manifest into abscesses and toxins into various body structures. Adult worms can live 1 to 2 years. The cycle goes like this:

1. Adult worms live in the small intestine. A female may produce up to 240,000 eggs per day, which are passed with the feces.
 2. Fertile eggs become infective after 18 days to several weeks.
 3. Infective eggs are swallowed.
 4. The larvae hatch.
 5. Larvae invade the intestine and are carried to the lungs.
 6. The larvae mature in the lungs (10 to 14 days), ascend the bronchials to the throat and are swallowed.
 7. Upon reaching the small intestine, develop into adult worms.
1. We are back to the beginning.

Ways your skunk can get roundworms:

1. Babies can be born with roundworms. The larvae are tiny enough to migrate through the placental blood supply to the fetal liver or lungs. Soon after birth, the juveniles begin migrating from the liver and/or lungs to the intestine where they grow to adults and begin laying eggs. Within 3 weeks after birth, the newborn baby can begin shedding roundworm eggs.
2. Through the mother's milk. Roundworm larvae can gain entry into the mammary glands and then be passed to the babies.
3. Ingestion. If the baby eats an embryonated egg found in fecal contamination of food or water bowls, nesting box or other sources.

The egg hatches within the intestine and a "blood-lung" migration begins as described in the following.

The 3 cases mentioned are all "blood-lung" migrations. Upon entering the animal's body, the larvae then migrate to the liver via the portal blood system (the one draining from the stomach

intestines and leading to the liver). The larvae are then carried by the circulatory system to the lungs, where they can pierce the walls of tiny lung blood vessels and gain entry into the airways (alveoli and bronchioles). The cilia lining the airways then move the larvae up the bronchi and the windpipe until they are coughed up and swallowed. Once they are swallowed they have become large enough that they can continue their maturation to adult egg-laying roundworms in the small intestine.

Actually, adult roundworms do little damage. They do not attach to the intestine wall and drain the pet's blood. They just move around in the intestine and eat some of the nutrients intended for the pet, or feast on the mucous lining of the intestinal wall. Occasionally they will cause irritation inside the intestine and diarrhea, or if they are in great enough numbers, they can actually block the intestine and constipate. If they find their way up into the stomach they can cause the pet to wretch and vomit the worm up. More important to health, are the migrating juveniles. As they pass through the liver and lungs, they can cause pneumonia or hepatitis.

Signs of roundworm infestation include:

Dull coat, yellowing of the fur, pot-belly, unthrifty appearance, poor weight gain, vomiting, coughing, diarrhea or constipation.

Heavily infested babies can die of worm-related pneumonia. Juveniles migrating through the liver and lungs will not be killed by wormers. This is why it is necessary to worm twice, 3 weeks apart. This allows all migrating juveniles to reach the intestine where they are easily killed.

You should look for the active ingredient Pyrantel Pamoate. Strongid, Drontal, Nemex-2 and Evict can be found on line. Dosage is based upon body weight. Panacur can be gotten through your vet.

Hookworms, Tapeworms

Skunk can also get hookworms and tapeworms and should be treated for those as well as roundworms. Most roundworm medications will not treat hookworms and tapeworms. You will need to use Ivermectin or Panacur.

One your baby's first visit to the veterinarian, a fecal should be done to determine if your baby has any parasites.

You can purchase deworming products at the following:

Thomas Veterinary Drug
<http://www.thomasveterinarydrug.com>

PetRX
<http://www.petrx.com/>



Did You Know?



Skunks are terrestrial and somewhat fossorial (burrowing).

Spay/Neuter

Depending on whether you get a little boy baby or a little girl baby, you need to start getting prepared to have him neutered or her spayed. Be aware that if you get your baby from a pet store and they tell you the babies are “fixed”, that only means they have been descented. Babies in pet stores come from the breeder descented, but not neutered or spayed.

The heat cycle puts a baby in a lot of physical stress and can cause health problems. It is recommended your baby be neutered/spayed before the heat cycle begins.

You may notice your usually sweet, loving little baby becoming a bit cranky lately. All of a sudden he or she begins to be a bit more nippy than usual. This is caused from rampant hormones. You can think of this as the skunk equivalent of the “terrible twos” or “PMS”.

Once a baby is neutered or spayed, it takes approximately 6 weeks for the hormones to get back into balance and your sweet, loving baby to return. In most cases boys are ready by 3½ months of age and 4 months old for females. Your baby should also weigh at least 3 pounds before being neutered or spayed.

You should speak to your vet before the surgery and ask certain questions. You want to ask what anesthetics will be used. Isoflurane and Enflurane are the safest of all gas anesthetics to use for skunks

Follow your veterinarian’s guidelines as to when the last feeding should be before surgery. Eight hours is usually what’s recommended. That ensures that all food is gone from the stomach and reduces the chance of vomiting during surgery and inhalation pneumonia.

Some skunks, especially the females will want to scratch at their stitches. We recommend your veterinarian use surgical glue instead of stitches. Sometimes the glue won’t hold and open up a bit. Although it seems time to panic, don’t. There is at least one layer of stitches on the inside of the incision that will keep the wound from opening up completely. Call your veterinarian and let them know what happened and follow their advice. They may want to apply more glue, but don’t be surprised if the wound is a few days old and starting to heal, if they decide not to

Your vet will probably advise cleaning the site with hydrogen peroxide and applying a cream that they prescribe. If your vet doesn’t prescribe an antibiotic cream, you can use Rescue Remedy cream. Rescue Remedy cream has healing properties and contains no alcohol, so doesn’t sting. Neosporin cream is also good.

You can fashion a sock sweater to slip over the body of your baby to protect the stitches. They won’t like it being there and will do their best to get out of it, so you will have to keep a diligent watch until the stitches heal.

All surgery, no matter how minor, comes with some risks. Make sure to monitor your baby closely for the week following surgery and watch for anything that may signal a problem. You want to make sure your baby is eating normally and check stools for anything unusual. Also make sure he or she urinates the usual amount and color. Check the incision site for any redness, swelling or oozing.

Although skunks come through their big boy and girl surgeries with little distress and are usually up and about the same day, you want to keep your eye open for any signs of trouble. Some things to watch for are lethargy, refusing to eat, trying to potty but can’t, and bloating or swelling. If you notice any of these signs, put a call in to your vet right away.

BITING

You should never play rough with your baby. Skunks do not outgrow biting. If your baby is encouraged to play nip, it will only get worse as the baby gets older and stronger. Babies that are taught it is ok to bite, grow into adults that are many times deemed unacceptable as pets by the very people that made them that way. Examples of what **not** to do are as follows:

Spin the skunkie – Laying the skunk on his back, like you would a kitten or puppy, letting him wrap his paws around your arm, and then giving him a spin. While he may enjoy it, this game is usually accompanied by nipping. This will be a huge problem as the skunk gets older.

Tickle the belly – This can also encourage play nipping.

Any time your baby starts nipping during play, stop that game immediately! Use of a stuffed animal or hand puppet will discourage him from biting the hand. Your baby must be taught that human hands are for giving of treats, grooming, petting and showing of affection. He must be taught they are not for biting.

A baby that is allowed to bite you now, will bite as an adult and it will be much worse then. It may get to where you can’t trust him not to bite you, your friends, your children, or his doctor. Many times skunks are re-homed because the original parents taught the baby it was great fun to bite while playing. Sadly, this is something that can always be avoided. Some babies are easier to teach not to bite than others, but with patience and understanding of what you are dealing with, you can teach your baby not to bite.

Featured Skunk

A Story About Our Angel Vittorio

We got a call about a very special rescue, and of course we said yes. We were still very new to skunkie ownership and Ashlar did not have us quite broken in yet. We really didn't think we could handle another one, and Ashlar KNEW he didn't want another one; but we had to help. I was at work when Vamp came back from the trip and she stopped by with a very skittish and fairly large baby. He was an instant hit on the hearts of all my fellow workers, and that is one gift he always had. As I held him for the first time he snuggled his head into the nape of my neck and smacked.

This poor baby had already been to three homes in about two weeks following a very long airplane ride. His whole world was constantly changing and until his last days this was a skunk that did not like any changes, not even a piece of lint had better be moved or he would show his disapproval, sometimes with the most creative and silliest stomps ever.

As Vittorio slowly realized he had arrived at his forever home he started to explore his territory with earnest. He would shy away from humans but he really tried to make friends with Ashlar. Poor boy got his feelings hurt daily because Ashlar would not play with him, and you could see the disappointment on his face after each ignored back scratch. After a few weeks the "bubble boy" in him showed up and we got our first experience with seizures. Poor boy had enough to be scared of and now he had to worry about these and had to have humans touching him to care for him. Before long he learned that humans were good for something besides food and poor attempts to play the way he wanted (he got upset if we tried...he wanted a skunk to play with and Ashlar would not) and would actually come looking for us when he felt a seizure starting. This helped us to keep them from getting too bad most of the time, until one day he had several really bad ones in a row. This kept happening to him all day, he was exhausted and we stayed up all night with him while he slept to make sure another one would not happen. Fortunately they did not because I do not think he could have taken anymore. As he healed from this he became very bonded to us and would snuggle with us all the time. He would play with us now and would perform for us daily. Each day when we got home from work and after his snack he would show off his newly created stomp, he became quite a clown and he kept us laughing. He really celebrated each day with gusto. Then after the show he would poof up his long pretty tail and high tail it to the bedroom in his specialized prance and take a nap. Shortly after he would come out for snuggles with the humans, and you had better acknowledge him. If you were sleeping, he would sneeze in your ear until you woke up and lifted the covers for him...no he would not go under on his own...he wanted you to know he was honoring you with his presence, then he would settle in and emit his happy sounds for several minutes.

We now were blessed with another very special rescue that we thought would make Vittorio happy because he might have a skunk to play with. Unfortunately Vittorio got very gender confused and we had to keep them separated because Vizagi was in really bad shape and very skittish. Meanwhile, Ashlar was allowing Vittorio to snuggle with him and would allow him to snuggle with us at the same time he was. This did not last long because they are both very headstrong about being the important one with the humans. They would wake up and find the other one near us and hiss and stomp and shove till one left. So now snuggle times were done separate.

About a year passes and it's time for blood work and "bubble boy" shows up again. He is showing signs of kidney and liver problems, most likely because of the antibiotics for previous nail infections. So now he has more meds to take and he is getting very mad at us for ruining all his favorite foods by sneaking in this nasty tasting stuff, so it gets hard to feed him...and he loses weight...which scares us since we don't want seizures again. Finally we get through the meds and he gets back on track with weight again.

Its now baby season and we take in a new rescue Valdamere, and he has plenty of attitude to fit right in but we need to keep him with Vizagi because he is the only one he does not try to bully, so still no skunk friend for Vittorio, so he settles back to being a clown for the humans. Then the never ending nail infection hits again and more meds and more watching the kidneys. Vittorio was so good about letting the humans know he did not feel good, he would even come to snuggle to take away his hiccups.

We then took in two girls, Mariah and Godiva and they all seemed to get along with everyone, but by now Vittorio had given up on trying to get a skunk to play with him so he would just snuggle with them.

Some time passed and we brought in our other special angel Shaitan and the horrific story started. Vittorio and Shaitan actually would have played together, they were always sniffing each other through the bars separating them, but they were never given the chance. Unknown to anyone, Shaitan arrived at the pet store with canine distemper. It took her at the age of 11 weeks and a month later Vittorio joined her. Although vaccinated, his weakened immune system could not handle being exposed to distemper. We know they are playing together at the bridge.

You can contact us if you need to re-home your skunk.
We can help you at no charge if you want to adopt a skunk.

Vaccinations

Skunks are susceptible to canine distemper and need to be vaccinated against it. The recommended canine distemper vaccines for use in skunks are the canine Galaxy DA2PPV and Merial's Purevax. It is advisable to pre-medicate 10 minutes before vaccinating with children's Benadryl syrup at the rate of 1cc/kg. Do not use Fervac Ferret vaccine on your baby. This vaccine has caused deaths in skunks. Live virus vaccines should never be used in skunks and the vaccine should be chicken based.

Allopathic protocol is that your baby should receive his first canine distemper vaccine at the age of 6 weeks, then another 2 weeks later. It is not known conclusively when the mother's protective antibodies wear off in her babies. If your baby is vaccinated against canine distemper and the mother's antibodies are still present in the baby, that vaccination is pretty much voided out. For this reason, it is felt to be necessary that your baby gets his follow up boosters two weeks following the first vaccine.

Holistic protocols (which we personally follow) are that your baby should not be vaccinated until the age of 6 months. This allows the immune system to become more developed. This also allows your baby to receive only one vaccine and be fully protected. Those that choose to follow this protocol should be extremely cautious against exposing the baby to any potential risks.

We do not recommend feline distemper vaccines. I have heard of only one case of a skunk contracting feline distemper, and there is no definitive proof that was actually the case. Feline vaccines have a definite link to some cancers. It is not worth the assault on the immune system to give a potentially harmful vaccine that could lead to cancer in the future.

Because there is no approved rabies vaccination for domestic skunks in the United States, most vets do not consider it worth the risk of the skunk having a reaction to give a skunk a rabies vaccine unless your skunk is in a situation to be exposed to rabies. Remember that even if your skunk is up to date with his rabies vaccine, it is considered "off label" and will not protect your skunk from being confiscated and killed to test for rabies in the case of a reported bite.

For some parents, to vaccinate or not to vaccinate can be a quandary. Many times a parent will think if their skunk doesn't go outside or out in public, it isn't going to be exposed to anything contagious, therefore doesn't need to be vaccinated. This sort of thinking can kill your pet! As an example, Canine Distemper is an airborne virus. Your pet can be exposed to it in a variety of ways, including you bringing it in on your clothes, shoes, or hair. Have you ever been to a pet store and stopped by the baby ferrets, or how about when the baby skunks come in? Both can be carriers of Canine Distemper and not display any symptoms at the time.

Fun Tips

Skunks are extremely curious creatures and it can sometimes be hard to keep them entertained. It is important to keep your skunk active for their physical and mental well being. A good way to keep them busy is to hide healthy snacks around the house in unexpected places. Keep changing the location of the hidden treats. You will have them guessing each time and checking out all the different places for the hidden treats.



If you would like your skunk to be featured in our newsletter, send a story and pictures to:
StripedBandits@yahoo.com

Invisaboo Zoo

Instead of the Invisaboo Zoo strip this month, we thought it would be a good idea to give you a little background on how it came to be.

A zoo worker named Scott in Anytown U.S.A was alone closing up the zoo late one night, when a freak truck accident occurred just outside the zoo. Two semi's, one hauling grapes and the other with a load of Purina One collided so hard that their loads mixed together completely. The result of this caused a strange chemical reaction and the cloud of this mixture drifted across the whole zoo.

The next morning after the cloud has disappeared....SO HAD THE ZOO!!! But not to fear, Scott and all the animals are ok... just they and the entire zoo are now invisible. The only way to see them is the fact that somehow a distinctive character about them is still visible.

Now Available For Purchase! Domestic Skunks, Book 1 – Babies

~ Testimonial from a happy customer ~

I love your book. I'm getting my first baby skunk in the next 2 weeks and i can't wait. Your book is the best I've seen. Please can you email me when you have books 2, 3 and 4.

Many thanks,
Patricia

\$15.50 each (includes postage)

Contact me at stripedbandits@yahoo.com or

Paypal your payment using the stripedbandits@yahoo.com account.

Question for Ashlar



Do you have a question you would like answered in a future issue?
Go to www.stripedbandits.com and fill out the question form.

Skunk Show Reminder

Skunkie Fun Day is being held on October 10, 2009

Givhan's Ferry State Park, Ridgeville, SC

For information and registration form contact Landa Berry at mberry2@sc.rr.com.

If there is a topic you would like to see on the newsletter, contact me at stripedbandits@yahoo.com.

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