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***Taenia - tapeworm type.***

Are not contracted from fleas

While the Common Tapeworm (*Dipylidium caninum*) are only contracted by fleas this *Taenia* tapeworm types are not contracted from fleas – this is the difference.

*Taenia* type tapeworms, like the common tapeworm correspond by presenting segments (hence the name tapeworm) that can be seen on your dog's anal area or on their faeces.

These *Taenia* type tapeworms are members of the *Taenia* genus.

There are several members of the *Taenia* genus that could be found presenting themselves in your dog – to know the difference between these types need a well-practiced eye or first-hand knowledge from where they came from in the first place.

*Taenia solium* (which infects humans when they consume undercooked pork)

*Taenia saginata* (which infects humans when they consume undercooked beef)

*Taenia hydatigena* (which infects dogs when they consume undercooked livestock or venison or feed from dead livestock or deer they find out in the world)

*Taenia taeniaformis* (which infects cats when they consume rats and mice)

*Taenia ovis* (which infects dogs after they consume dead sheep or undercooked lamb)

*Taenia multiceps* (which infects dogs that eat the brains of infected sheep)

*Taenia crassiceps* (which infects dogs when they consume rats and mice)

*Taenia serialis* and *Taenia pisiformis* (which infects dogs when they consume dead rabbits)

Since dogs are our concern, we will stick to the **Taenia** species that infect dogs.

### **The life cycle of the Taenia tapeworm.**

Taenia tapeworms start in the host's intestine, the host being a dog. The worm can be unbelievably long (up to 4m for *Taenia hydatigena*) and is made of segments.

Each segment contains an independent set of organs with new segments being created at the neck and older segments dropping off the tail.

As segments mature the reproductive tract of the segment becomes more and more prominent until it consists of a bag of tapeworm eggs.

These segments, called "proglottids" are passed with the faeces into the world where an unsuspecting intermediate host (mouse, rabbit, deer, sheep etc.) swallows one while feeding.

The young tapeworm hatches in the new host's intestine and escapes into the blood supply with the next stop being the liver.

The larval tapeworm wanders through the liver, leaving bloody tracks behind it and ultimately falls into the abdominal cavity where it forms a sac and waits.

After about 2 months of development in this location, the larval tapeworm is ready to continue its development but it will need a new host to do so.

When the host dies or is killed a predator – in this case the dog - the sack and its young tapeworm inside may be consumed accidentally. 2 months later, inside the predator/dog, the young tapeworm is now mature and is beginning to shed its first segments and the cycle begins again.

A trained eye and a workable knowledge is needed to know the visual difference between them.



*The tapeworm on the right is a member of the Taenia genus while Dipylidium on the left.*

In most cases, tapeworm segments seen are from *Dipylidium caninum*, which is not called “the common tapeworm” for nothing (i.e. it is very common).

The segments of *Dipylidium* are longer than they are wide and are said to look like grains of rice.

The segments of a *Taenia* tapeworm are wider than they are long.

### **Is it important to know the difference?**

The good news here is that the same medication, [Praziquantel](#), kills both types of tapeworms efficiently.

Where it becomes useful to know one type of worm from another is when it comes to prevention.

*Dipylidium* comes from swallowing a flea; *Taenia* comes from swallowing carrion or hunting prey.