

Robinson Veterinary Services

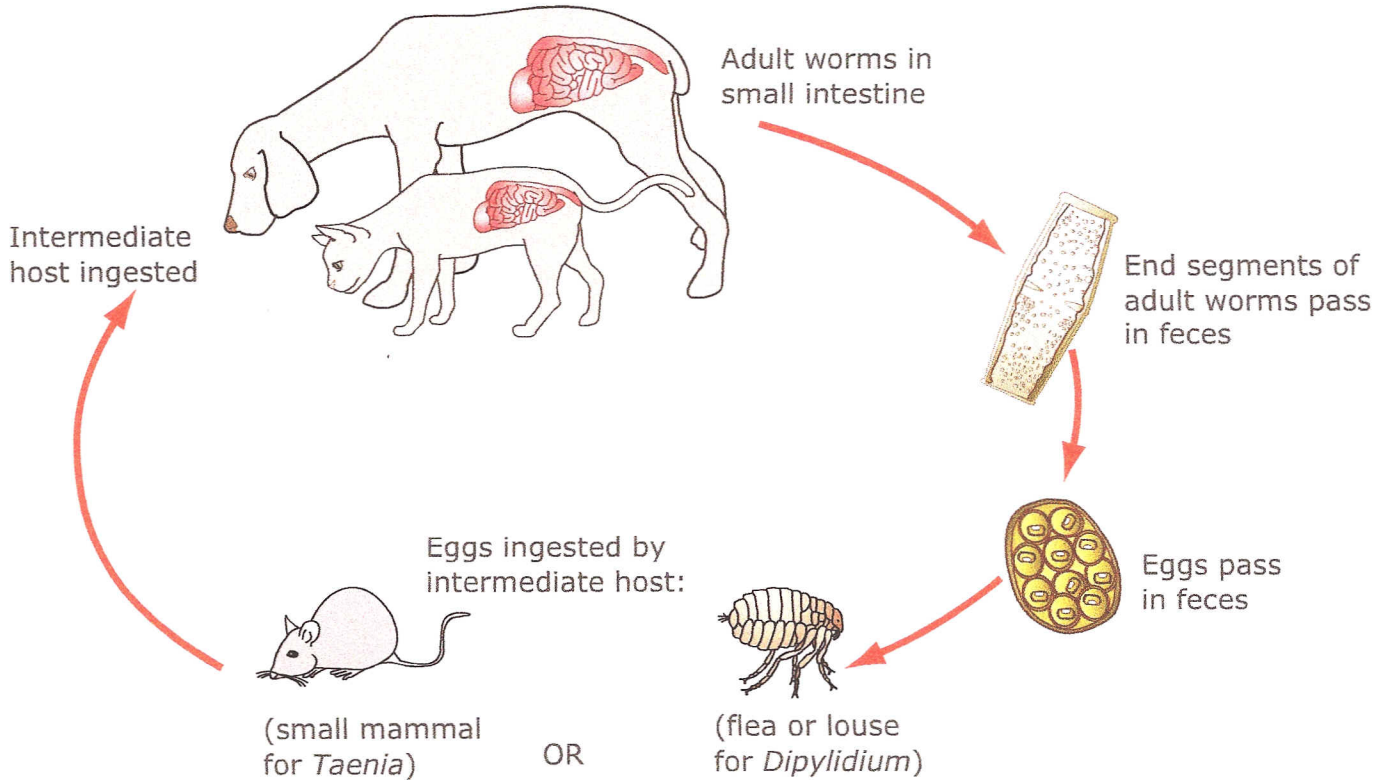
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Tapeworm Life Cycle: Life cycle of taenia and dipylidium species.



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Tapeworms are intestinal worms belonging to the cestode family of parasites. To complete their life cycle, these parasites require an intermediate host. *Dipylidium caninum* requires a flea or louse, while members of the *Taenia* family require a bird, mouse, or rabbit. Infective tapeworm eggs are consumed by the intermediate host and mature in the host's tissues. A cat or dog must then eat and digest the infected intermediate host. During digestion, the tapeworm larva escapes from the intermediate host's tissues and continues its life cycle, developing into an adult tapeworm. The adult tapeworm hooks onto the wall of the small intestine where it feeds and reproduces. The worm is segmented, and eggs develop in its terminal segments, or proglottids. Ripe proglottid segments break off and pass out on the surface of the cat's stool. Proglottids are visible to the naked eye as small white structures that resemble grains of rice. The only way a human can become infested with a tapeworm is by ingesting a flea or the raw meat of an intermediate host.