

## Survey: Cat Owners Do Little to Prevent Pet Parasites

**A gulf between knowledge and action exists, according to study.**

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While many people are aware that children are especially at risk of being affected by zoonotic disease caused by the transmission of parasites to humans by pets, they appear indifferent to the risk, according to a new survey.

The national survey of more than 1,000 cat and dog owners was conducted in September 2006 for the nonprofit Companion Animal Parasite Council.

More than a third of the respondents (38 percent) said children play in an area where a pet leaves waste. Of that number, 21 percent said they never remove the waste.

Only 47 percent of respondents said they always wash their hands after contact with a pet, leaving a wide margin of opportunity for zoonotic disease transmission to occur.

“Children are especially vulnerable, given their close contact with pets and pet environments. They should not be allowed to play in the dirt in areas such as playgrounds and sandboxes where animals defecate. That being virtually impossible, it’s best to prevent parasites in the first place through year-round control,” said Michael Paul, DVM, executive director of the CAPC.

Even though 80 percent of pet owners surveyed were aware that parasites that can make their pet sick can also be transmitted to humans, only 23 percent reported being “extremely” or “very” concerned about this happening to them.

Many parasites — including fleas, ticks, tapeworms, roundworms, hookworms and scabies — are zoonotic, meaning animals can transmit them to humans.

For more information, visit the CAPC’s animal health website, [www.petsandparasites.org](http://www.petsandparasites.org).