

Sandworm / Larva migrans

Dr. P.T. Kenny.



▲ LARVA MIGRANS

Presentation: An intensely itchy mobile urticaria, usually on the feet, caused by the migrating larvae of the dog hookworm. The worm cannot enter the human lymphatic system or veins to continue its life cycle.



A wandering thread like line about 3mm wide is produced. It is very itchy and forms bizarre serpentine patterns

Introduction

- Cutaneous Larva migrans is caused by *Ancylostoma braziliense*, the **hookworm of cats or dogs**.
- Ovae of the parasite is deposited on the ground in cat or dog faeces and the larvae survive in warm, moist soil.
- The larvae penetrate the exposed skin of the feet, buttocks or back that come into contact with the soil.
- The parasite burrows in the superficial layers of the skin, defaecates and cause a winding, very itchy, ridge of inflammation. Scratching these lesions may lead to secondary infection and dermatitis.

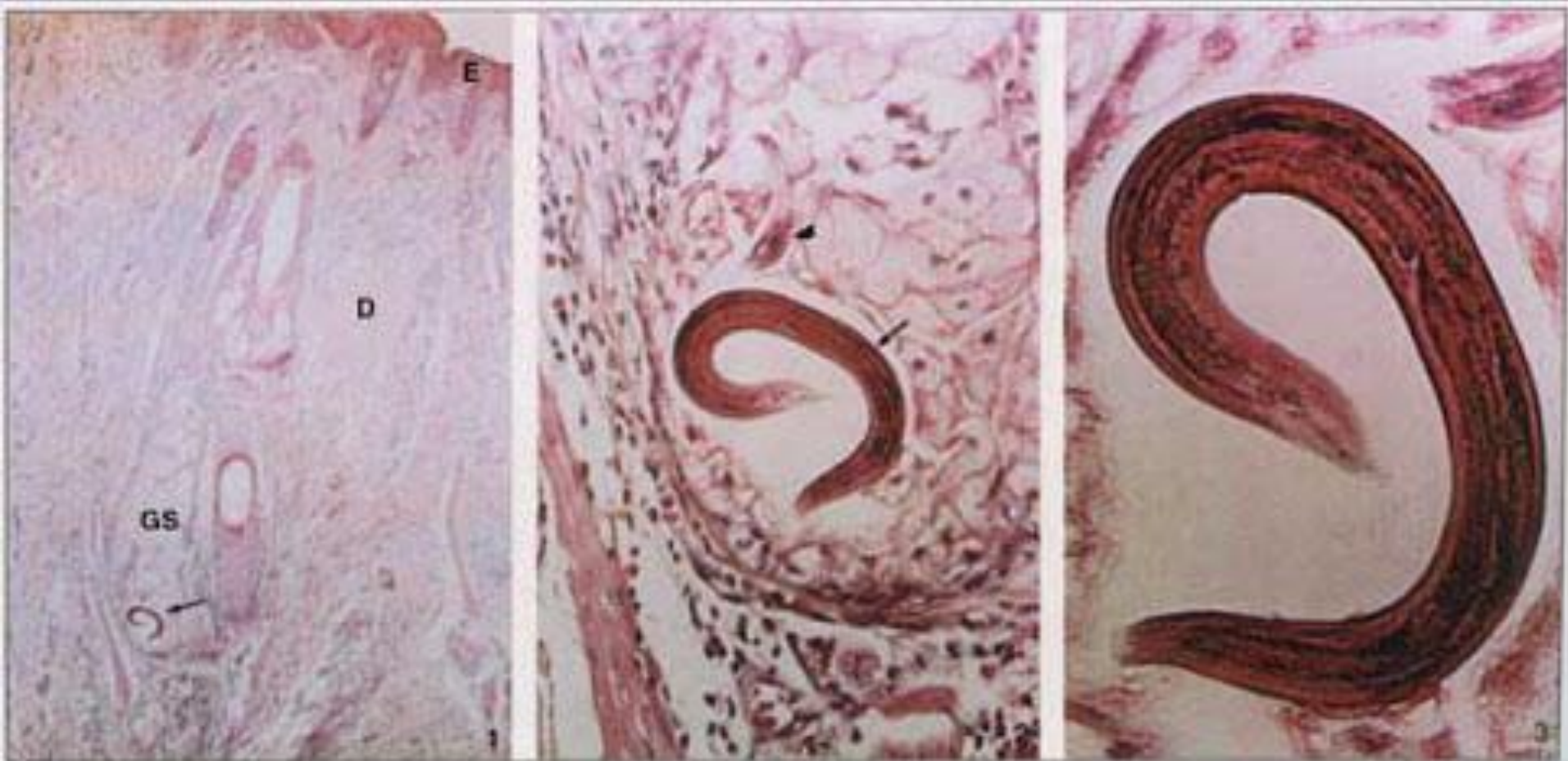


Figure 1 - Hematoxylin and eosin stained paraffin section of scalp skin showing helminth larva within a sebaceous gland (GS). E = epidermis; D = dermis (x25,5).

Figure 2 - Two helminth larvae (arrow and arrow-head) within scalp sebaceous gland (higher magnification of the Figure 1; 127,5).

Figure 3 - Higher magnification of the helminth larva point with arrow-head in Figure 2. The esophageal shape and the esophageal-intestinal junction are consistent with those of an infective larva of *Ancylostoma* sp (x255).

Management

- Freezing the affected area with ethyl chloride spray, liquid nitrogen or solid CO₂, is **seldom effective**.
- 10% Thiabendazole suspension (only obtainable at vets) applied topically 4x per day for 7 to 10 days is very effective.
- Try the following recipe: Crush two Zentel® tablets (=Albendazole 200mg tabs). Mix the powder with 5g Dovate/Dermovate ointment. (An ointment penetrates the skin more easily, though a cream mixes more easily). Instruct the patient to apply a thin layer of the ointment to the affected area twice daily and to continue until it is finished.

Remarks

- The cortisone helps a lot to ease the itch, and with penetration of the Zentel® into the skin.
- If left untreated, the larvae usually dies after 10 to 14 days because their lifecycle can not be completed.
- Oral treatment of the infestation with Zentel is apparently also effective, but the duration of treatment is uncertain (? 2 tabs daily x2).
- Other drugs like Vermox, etc. are also used, but with varying success.