

Welcome

Hope everyone is staying well. This month we will be sharing some information with you regarding heartworm disease in cats. If you have any questions or have a topic you would like to hear about please contact our staff at 630-365-9599 or you can contact us via email at 3lburn@sbcglobal.net

What is heartworm disease?

I'm sure most of us are familiar with heartworm disease in dogs. Heartworm disease is a serious and potentially fatal disease in pets in the United States and many other parts of the world. It is caused by foot long worms that live in the heart, lungs and other organs of the body. Heartworm disease affects dogs, cats and ferrets, but they can live in other animal species including wolves, coyotes, foxes, sea lions, and in rare instances, humans. Species such as foxes and coyotes can live in close proximity to urban areas, so they are considered important carriers.

DOGS - The dog is a natural host for the heartworm, which means the heartworms that live inside the dog mature into adults, mate and produce offspring. If untreated, their numbers can increase, and dogs have been known to harbor several hundred worms in their bodies at once. Heartworm disease causes lasting damage to the heart, lungs and arteries, and can affect the dog's health and quality of life long after the parasites are gone. This is why prevention is the best option, and treatment, when needed, should be administered as early in the course of the disease as possible.

CATS - Heartworm disease in cats is very different from heartworm disease in dogs. The cat is an atypical host for heartworms,

and most worms in cats do not survive to the adult stage. Cats with adult heartworms typically have just one to three worms, and many cats affected by heartworm have no adult worms. While this means heartworm disease often goes undiagnosed in cats, it's important to understand that even immature worms cause real damage in the form of a condition known as heartworm associated respiratory disease (HARD). Also, the medicine used to treat heartworm in dogs, cannot be used in cats, so prevention is the only means of protecting cats from the effects of heartworm.

7 Deadly Truths of Heartworm Disease in Cats

Feline heartworm disease has been diagnosed in all 50 states. Be sure to discuss heartworm prevention with your veterinarian at your cat's annual check-up.



- 1 Infected mosquitoes spread heartworm, and approximately 3 in 4 cats exposed to heartworm-infected mosquito larvae become infected.
- 2 Adult heartworms can live for 2-4 years in cats.
- 3 Even 1 immature heartworm can permanently affect your cat's health and ability to breathe by causing an inflammatory reaction in the blood vessels and lungs.
- 4 Researchers began studying feline heartworm disease 20 years ago. Now we know that cats get heartworms almost as often as dogs, although heartworm tests in cats don't always catch infection.
- 5 There are NO approved medications for treating heartworm in cats. If your cat develops heartworm infection, you and your veterinarian can only manage, not treat, the cat's condition.
- 6 1 in 4 cases of heartworm occur in cats that live indoors. Since mosquitoes can get inside, indoor cats need protection, too.
- 7 Only 5% of cats are on preventive medication. It is important to discuss prevention with your veterinarian at your annual check-up.

While heartworms can cause serious—and potentially fatal—disease in cats, preventing heartworm disease is easy. Talk to your veterinarian about what preventive product will work best for you and your cat. Know the truths about heartworm and protect your cat 12 months a year.



AMERICAN HEARTWORM SOCIETY
EST. 1974

FELINE PRACTITIONERS

For more information visit
www.catvets.com/cat-owners/disease-and-conditions/heartworm-disease
www.heartwormsociety.org/heartworms-in-cats

How is heartworm disease transmitted from one pet to another?

The mosquito plays an essential role in the heartworm life cycle. Adult female heartworms living in an infected dog, fox, coyote or wolf produce microscopic baby worms called microfilaria that circulate in the bloodstream. When a mosquito bites and infected animal and takes a blood meal, it picks up these tiny worms, which develop into an infective stage larvae over a period of 10 - 14 days. Then when the infected mosquito bites another dog, cat or other susceptible wild animal, the infective larvae are deposited into the animal's skin and enter the new host through the mosquito's bite wound. Once inside a new host, it takes approximately 6 months for the larvae to mature into adult heartworms. Once mature, heartworms can live for 5 to 7 years in dogs and up to 3 years in cats. Because of the longevity of these worms, each mosquito season can lead to an increasing number of worms in an infected pet.

What are the signs of heartworm disease in cats?

Signs of heartworm disease in cats can be very subtle or very dramatic. Symptoms may include coughing, asthma-like attacks, periodic vomiting, lack of appetite, or weight loss. Occasionally an affected cat may have difficulty walking, experience fainting or seizures, or suffer from fluid accumulation in the abdomen. Unfortunately, the first sign in some cases is sudden collapse of the cat, or sudden death.

How significant is my cat's risk for heartworm infection?

Many factors must be considered, even if heartworms do not seem to be a problem in your local area. Your community may have a greater incidence of heartworm disease than you realize. Heartworm is also spreading to new regions of the country each year. Stray and neglected dogs and certain wildlife such as coyotes, wolves and foxes can be carriers of heartworm. Also the relocation of infected pets to previously uninfected areas also contribute to the spread of heartworm disease.

The fact that heartworm has been diagnosed in all 50 states, and risk factors are impossible to predict. Climate variations to the presence of wildlife carriers, cause rates of infections to vary dramatically from year to year. And because infected mosquitos can come inside, both outdoor and indoor pets are at risk.

Heartworm testing for cats is not conclusive like it is in dogs. It can be difficult to diagnose in cats.

For that reason the American Heartworm Society recommends that you keep your pets on heartworm preventative all year round.

Heartworm disease is a serious, progressive disease. The earlier it is detected, the better the chances the pet will recover. There are few, if any early sign of disease when a dog or cat is infected with heartworms, so detecting their presence with a heartworm test administered by a veterinarian is important. The test requires just a small blood sample from your pet, and it works by detecting the presence of heartworm

proteins. If your pet tests positive, further test may be ordered.

In a dog, we want to test prior to treatment. Cats can receive treatment prior to testing. We will test a cat is suspicious of heartworm disease.

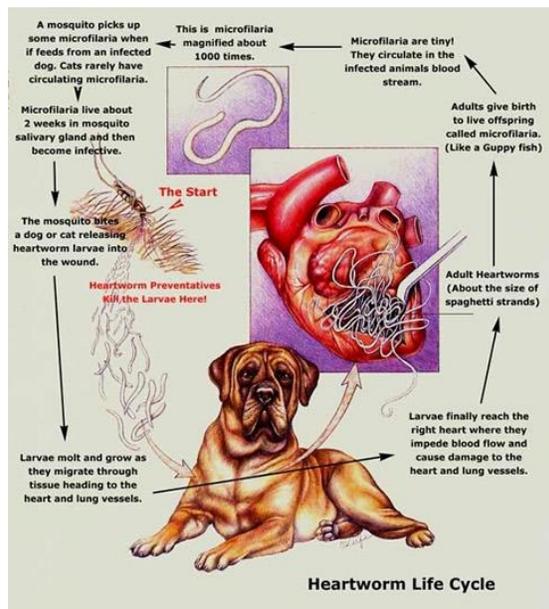
When should my cat be tested?

Heartworm infection in cats is harder to detect than in dogs because cats are much less likely than dogs to have adult heartworms. Because there is no approved treatment for heartworm infection in cats, prevention is critical.

What if my cat tests positive for heartworm?

Because a cat is not an ideal host for heartworms, some infections resolve on their own, although these infections can leave cats with respiratory system damage. Heartworms in the circulatory system also affect the cat's immune system and cause symptoms such as coughing, wheezing, and difficulty breathing. Heartworms in cats may even migrate to other parts of the body, such as the brain, eye and spinal cord. Severe complications such as blood clots in the lungs and lung inflammation can result when the adult worms die in the cat's body.

Again, the safest way to be sure your pet, dogs and cats, are protected is to give a monthly prevention year round, such as Heartgard, or a topical such as Revolution.



If you have any questions or comments, please email us at 31burn@sbcglobal.net or call 630-365-9599! If you have a subject you would like covered in our newsletter please let us know!