

## Could your cat have **Heartworm?**

*Learn how to protect your cat from this dangerous parasite so your pet can live a long, healthy life.*

### **Three common questions**

#### **Should I be concerned about heartworm in my pet?**

Yes. Heartworm can be a very serious problem for both dogs and cats, especially in mosquito-infested areas, so anywhere a dog can get heartworm, a cat can too.

Heartworm infection can kill or seriously debilitate infected pets because the worms live in the bloodstream, lungs and heart. A blood test can be performed to determine if your pet has heartworm infection. A year-round preventative program is most effective to keep cats free of heartworms.

#### **Can I prevent this disease?**

There are several very effective, easy to administer preventatives and your veterinarian can discuss the benefits of each.

#### **My cat stays indoors, is he/she at risk for heartworms?**

A study from North Carolina shows that both indoor and outdoor cats are susceptible.\*  
\*KNOW Heartworms Inside & Out, Volume 1. Available at [www.knowheartworms.org](http://www.knowheartworms.org). Accessed July 2007.

## **Learn more about heartworm infection**

Heartworm infection is caused by a parasitic infection that can be fatal. The parasite is a worm called *Dirofilaria Immitis*, which makes its home in the cat's circulatory system and can cause the animal to become very sick. Your cat can get heartworm infection if bitten by a mosquito carrying the parasite.

Heartworm infection can cause a number of serious symptoms, including vomiting, difficulty breathing, and heart and lung damage. These symptoms may be hidden, so it's very important to have your cat tested during its annual visit.

## **Your guide to UNDERSTANDING feline heartworm infection**

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### **Cause**

Mosquitoes transfer worm larvae from an infected animal, usually a dog or wildlife, to a cat. The larvae develop into worms that live in the cat's circulatory system.

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### **Most common signs of infection**

No signs at first, then possibly: - Mild, intermittent cough

- Asthma-like symptoms
- Increased respiratory rate
- Reduced appetite

- Vomiting/Diarrhea
- Weight Loss

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**Disease progression if left undetected or untreated**

**Respiratory distress, seizures, death**

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**Diagnosis**

Heartworm infection can be challenging to diagnose. It may be necessary to run multiple diagnostic tests depending on initial findings and symptoms.

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**Treatment**

Your veterinarian can discuss the appropriate treatment to reduce your cat's symptoms depending on the severity of the infection.

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**Prevention**

Monthly preventive treatment is available and should begin after a blood test has been conducted to determine if your cat has already been exposed or is infected.

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**Vaccine available**

No vaccine is available at this time.

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**IMPORTANT: The American Heartworm Society recommends testing your prior to administering preventatives.**

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*Cats often show **no signs of infection**,  
so it's important to ask your veterinarian about **heartworm testing**  
as part of your cat's annual wellness exam.*