

Feline Heartworm Disease

YOUR GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING FELINE HEARTWORM INFECTION

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.

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

Disease progression if left undetected or untreated

Respiratory distress, seizures, death

Diagnosis

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

Treatment

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

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.

Vaccine available?

Not available at this time.

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

Mosquito-borne disease life cycle

1 The mosquito ingests baby heartworms (larvae) when biting an infected animal



2 Infected mosquito transmits heartworm larvae into healthy cat

4 Adult worms invade the heart and pulmonary arteries



3 Larvae mature and migrate through cat's tissues

*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.*



*Information compiled from several sources.
Special thanks to Dr. Lynn Buzhardt for her contributions.

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