

Feline Heartworm Disease

IF MOSQUITOES ARE IN YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR CAT COULD BE AT RISK OF HEARTWORM INFECTION.

Frequently asked questions

For more information about the health of your cat, go to kittytest.com.

Why should I be concerned about feline heartworm disease?

- Heartworm disease affects both cats and dogs. And research shows in communities where dogs get heartworm, feline infection can be as high as 15% for the same area.¹
- Of the total of infected cats, 27% are considered by their owners to be indoor-only.² This means both indoor and outdoor cats are at risk of heartworm exposure.
- Even a single heartworm can be fatal to cats.³ Cats have a natural immune response to heartworm, however, some worm larvae may still reach the mature (fatal) stage.

References:

1. Ryan WG, Newcomb KM. Prevalence of feline heartworm disease—a global review. In: Soll MD, Knight DH, eds. *Proceedings of the Heartworm Symposium '95*. Batavia, IL: American Heartworm Society; 1995:79–86.
2. Atkins CE, DeFrancesco TC, Coats JR, Sidley JA, Keene BW. Heartworm infection in cats: 50 cases (1985–1997). *JAVMA*. 2000;217(3):355–358.
3. Feline heartworm disease. American Heartworm Society Web Site. www.americanheartwormsociety.org/pet-owner-resources/feline-heartworm.html. Accessed on June 23, 2010.

How does heartworm disease affect cats?

- Feline heartworm disease is caused by a parasitic infection with the worm, *Dirofilaria immitis*. Transferred from the bite of a mosquito carrier, worm larvae travel to the cat's circulatory system where they can cause serious problems with the heart and lungs
- Especially in early stages, heartworm infection shows few, if any, signs. As disease progresses, an infected cat may show asthma-like symptoms, mild cough or weight loss. Regular testing is the only way to know if your cat is infected.
- There is no cure or vaccine for feline heartworm, but it is virtually 100% preventable. Administering preventative will help safeguard against new heartworm exposures and chronic infection, as well as other parasites.

What can I do to help?

- Have your cat tested as soon as possible. Testing will help your veterinarian understand your cat's infection status and provide a baseline for future tests.
- Talk to your veterinarian about prevention. Monthly preventive is available to help safeguard against new heartworm exposures and chronic infection, as well as other parasites.
- If your cat tests positive, monitor them closely at home and follow veterinarian recommendations if you see signs of respiratory distress, coughing or vomiting.

