



Blue Springs

Animal Hospital & Pet Resort

"It's All About Caring"



HEARTWORM DISEASE IN CATS

Heartworm disease has long been recognized as a common and potentially fatal disease in dogs. More recently, research on cats has shown that cats can also be infected with heartworms.

Heartworms are spread to cats by mosquitoes, which transmit an immature form of the worm when they bite. The immature worms migrate through the body to the heart where they mature, often growing to lengths of 12-14 inches. As the worms grow, they plug the vessels in the heart and cause severe and permanent damage to the heart and lungs.

The signs of heartworm disease are not apparent until the heart has been severely affected. The signs include lethargy, coughing, vomiting, and difficulty breathing. Because cats' hearts are so small, just one or two worms cause severe damage and potentially death.

While indoor cats would seemingly be at decreased risk for heartworms due to less exposure to mosquitoes, studies done at Texas A & M Veterinary School found that 30% of affected cats were strictly indoor cats. This means that **even cats kept totally indoors get bitten by mosquitoes and are at risk of infection.**

At this time there is no treatment to eliminate heartworms from cats once they are infected. Drugs that have been successfully used in dogs are toxic to cats.

Fortunately, a preventative is available to protect your cat. A once monthly dose of Heartgard® or Revolution® given year round is highly effective at preventing infection in cats. Because of differences in the life cycle of the worm between dogs and cats, a blood test prior to starting prevention is not necessary in cats. **Heartgard®** is a meaty chewable that is well liked and accepted by cats, and **Revolution®** is a liquid that is applied to the skin.

Due to the high incidence of heartworms in Missouri and the severity of disease in infected animals, Blue Springs Animal Hospital currently recommends that all cats and dogs take preventatives on the same day every month of the year throughout their entire lives. To start your pet on the preventative, please call or stop by the hospital and we will be happy to assist you.

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