

Feline Heartworm Disease FAQ's

I thought heartworm disease was only in dogs; is this a new disease?

Until recently, heartworm disease was thought to be primarily a dog disease. Recent research has shown that the same heartworm (D. Immitis) that infects dogs can also infect cats, too.

Is this a common disease?

It is estimated that 5-15% of cats in heartworm endemic areas are infected. The research is on going.

Is Heartworm disease the same in cats as it is in dogs?

The heartworm parasite is the same, and both dogs and cats are infected by the bite of a mosquito. The main differences are cats tend to be infected with fewer worms and the cat's immune system is often able to clear the infections.

So if cats are so good at fighting off heartworms, why should I worry?

The problem is when the cats' immune system fights off the worms; it causes significant damage to the lungs. When the heartworms die, they can result in severe lung inflammation, blood clots, and can even trigger a fatal allergic reaction.

What are the clinical signs of heartworm infection?

Often, there are none! Sometimes feline heartworm disease is often mistaken for asthma or allergic bronchitis, as the clinical signs are similar. Lethargy, wheezing, coughing, breathing fast and hard, vomiting, or neurological signs can be seen. These signs are part of a syndrome know as Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease (HARD).

Is there a test for heartworm infections in cats?

Testing for heartworm infections in cats is tricky. We test if we have a cat that has clinical signs of HARD. There are several tests to do including serology, thoracic radiography (X-rays), and ECGs. Routine yearly testing like we do in dogs is not practical, in part because the tests available for cats are not as reliable as for dogs.

How do I prevent heartworms in cats?

We recommend Revolution. It is a once a month topical (easier to use with cats) medication that not only prevents heartworms, it also treats and prevents fleas, roundworms, hookworms, and ear mites.

My cat is indoor only: Do I still need the preventative?

Yes. 25% of cats with proven heartworm infection are kept indoors exclusively. Mosquitoes can enter the house and infect your cat.

What are the more commonly reported side effects?

Revolution is generally well-tolerated. In studies, <1% of cats and dogs experienced digestive upset. Approximately 1% of cats experienced temporary hair loss at the application site. This product shouldn't be used in sick, weak or underweight animals. For more information ask your veterinarian or visit www.catsoftherevolution.com.