

What can I do?

Parasites can have a negative impact on the relationship between you and your pet. There are things you can do to prevent your cat from getting a parasitic infection. Some important preventive measures include practicing good personal hygiene, treating your cat with internal and external parasite treatment and control medication, regularly cleaning your cat's litter box, only feeding your cat cooked or prepared food and not allowing your cat to hunt.



There are many options available that will protect your pet from the most common parasites.

Heartworm disease is harmful, even fatal, but very preventable. All heartworm preventives are highly effective and easy to administer. Ask your veterinarian for current recommendations regarding year-round, broad spectrum heartworm preventives for your cat.

Feline Heartworm Disease

5 Myths and Misunderstandings

#1—Dogs vs. Cats

I thought heartworm was mainly a dog's disease.

Heartworm disease is not just a canine disease. Heartworms affect cats differently than dogs, but the disease they cause is equally serious.

#2—Indoor vs. Outdoor Cats

But my cat stays indoors, so she is safe, right?

It only takes one mosquito to infect a cat, and because mosquitoes can get indoors, both indoor and outdoor cats are at risk and should receive heartworm preventive medication. In a North Carolina study, 28 percent of the cats diagnosed with heartworm were inside-only cats.

#3—It's a Heart Disease

How does it affect my cat?

The name "heartworm disease" is a misnomer, as it mostly affects the lungs and not just the heart. Signs are often mistaken for feline asthma, allergic bronchitis or other respiratory diseases.

#4—Adult Heartworms vs. Juvenile Heartworms

What if the juvenile heartworms never develop into adult worms?

Cats do not need an adult heartworm to exhibit clinical signs; in fact, juvenile heartworms are a main cause of the problems. Studies show 50 percent of cats infected with juvenile heartworms have significant disease of the small arteries supplying blood to the lungs.

#5—Diagnosis

Is it easy to test whether my cat has heartworm disease?

Diagnosis is difficult as negative antigen and antibody tests do not rule out heartworm disease. Positive tests, however, are significant.



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KNOW
HEARTWORMS

For more information,
please visit
www.knowheartworms.org

Proactive prevention is the ONLY sure way to protect cats

Information on Parasites and Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease



Some information in this brochure is derived from the Companion Animal Parasite Council's (CAPC) Guidelines.



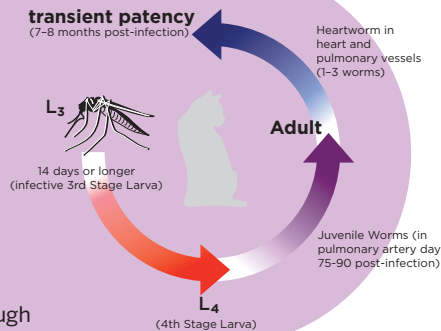
Pfizer Animal Health

How does a cat get a parasite?

Parasites can attack your cat in many different ways. Heartworm is contracted when an infected mosquito bites a cat. Roundworms are contracted when your cat ingests worm eggs that have been passed through the feces of an infected cat or dog. Tapeworms can be contracted if your cat eats fleas or other hosts (such as rodents) that carry tapeworm larvae. Other intestinal worm larvae can be passed through the mother cat's milk to her kitten. Another unique parasite is a hookworm, whose larvae thrive in moist soil. Your cat can simply step on a larva and it can pass through the skin of its paw. Still other parasites, mites, for example, can be contracted if your cat has direct contact with an infected cat. Considering all the ways your cat could become infected, it would be impossible for you to make sure your cat avoids all the possible situations. Therefore, it is necessary to give your cat preventive medication. There are many options available that will protect your pet from the most common parasites.

How does a cat get heartworm?

Heartworm infection takes place when a mosquito carrying microscopic heartworm larvae bites a cat. The larvae enter through the bite wound where they develop in the tissues. The immature worms then enter a blood vessel and are carried to the arteries in the lung where they cause an inflammatory reaction. This inflammatory reaction can cause cats to have respiratory problems such as difficulty breathing or coughing. Most worms die at this stage, causing even more inflammation and damaging vital lung tissue. Worms that survive and progress to the adult stage may live undetected for a couple of years. But, when the adult worms die, the inflammation can be severe enough to cause death. The respiratory signs associated with these reactions are called Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease (HARD).

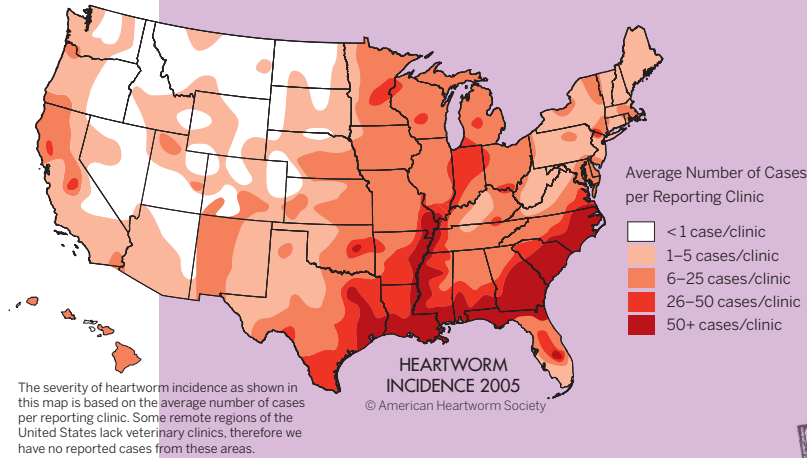


Can my cat give me a parasite?

Yes, there are a few common parasites that can be shared between cats and humans. The most common is roundworms; 3 to 6 million people in the United States are infected with roundworm larvae each year.

Animal parasites that can cause disease in humans:

- Fleas
- Heartworms
- Hookworms
- Roundworms
- Sarcoptic Mange
- Tapeworms
- Ticks
- Toxoplasma



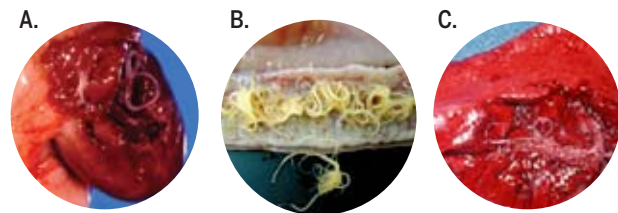
How can I tell if my cat has parasites?

Some parasites are easier than others to recognize. If you see changes in your cat's grooming habits, notice your cat consistently scratching or observe patches of hair loss, it is possible your cat has fleas or mites. Intestinal parasites are usually only diagnosed with a veterinary exam and analysis of your cat's feces. Heartworm disease can be particularly devastating and is difficult to diagnose. This is why it's important to have your cat examined regularly and placed on year-round prevention.

What should I KNOW about heartworms?

One study conducted in the Texas Gulf Coast region in the late 1990s revealed heartworm antibodies were present in 26 percent of the cats examined, indicating the cats were infected at some point in their lives. Adult worms were present in 10 percent. The rate of heartworm infection was significantly higher than that of feline leukemia virus infection at 5 percent, and feline immunodeficiency virus infection at 6 percent.

The American Heartworm Society and the American Association of Feline Practitioners have launched a joint campaign, funded by an educational grant from Pfizer, to promote awareness of the serious danger of heartworm disease in cats that reveals itself as HARD (Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease). The KNOW Heartworms campaign is a public awareness program to educate veterinarians and cat owners on the real threat of heartworm and the importance of prevention.



A: Adult heartworm inside a feline heart
B: Roundworms in the intestine
C: Lung inflamed due to adult heartworm infection

Photos of heartworm, roundworms and lung courtesy of Pfizer

How can I tell if my cat has heartworm?

Signs Associated With HARD: Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease

- Coughing
- Difficulty breathing
- Vomiting
- Lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Diarrhea
- Weight loss
- Rapid heart rate
- Fainting
- Blindness
- Collapse
- Convulsions
- Sudden death

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