

Feline Heartworm Disease

# 5 Myths and Misunderstandings

*Revealed*

Program Guide



# Getting Your Clients to “KNOW Heartworms” –Inside & Out

Dear Practice Manager or Veterinary Technician:

Welcome to the beginning of your clinic’s **KNOW Heartworms** campaign. Your cat-owning clients will thank you for the valuable information you are providing them. Many cat owners are not aware of how devastating feline heartworm disease can be to their pet’s health. As a result, the American Heartworm Society (AHS) and the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) have developed this campaign with an educational grant from Pfizer Animal Health.

Promoting heartworm prevention not only enhances the overall veterinary care you provide to feline patients but also builds client confidence in your practice by demonstrating the ability to provide state-of-the-art scientific information. This guide contains all the tools and information you need to promote the program in your clinic. Be sure to visit [www.knowheartworms.org](http://www.knowheartworms.org) for downloadable graphics and documents you will find useful. On a national level, the **KNOW Heartworms** campaign will include outreach to television, Internet, radio and newspapers. Plan on getting involved on a local level and communicating this valuable information directly to your clients.

Charles Thomas (Tom) Nelson, DVM  
President  
American Heartworm Society

James R. Richards, DVM  
Director of the Cornell Feline Health Center  
Cornell University  
College of Veterinary Medicine

### Staff Education

- Hold a meeting to share with your co-workers when the campaign will be implemented in your clinic so they are familiar with the materials.

### Use The Tools In This Guide

- Go through the checklist with cat owners to walk them through heartworm education and prevention.
- Use the news release in your clinic newsletter.
- Visit the official Web site, [www.knowheartworms.org](http://www.knowheartworms.org), for additional downloadable printouts to use in your clinic.
- Share the games pages for kids including coloring pages, puzzle printouts, etc.
- Fill out the clinic form contest and share with us how you’ve promoted the campaign.

### About The AHS Feline Heartworm Guidelines

Review the guidelines on pages four through eleven in the newsletter, *KNOW Heartworms Inside & Out*. The purpose of these updated guidelines is to educate veterinary professionals on the latest, ongoing research conducted around the world. The research is conducted by veterinarians and parasitologists at several universities, private laboratories and pharmaceutical companies. The goal of the **KNOW Heartworms** campaign is to educate veterinarians and cat owners about the real threat of heartworm and the importance of prevention. Therefore, you can find these guidelines posted on the Web site at [www.knowheartworms.org](http://www.knowheartworms.org).



# Feline Heartworm Checklist

Your cat’s name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

## Health Assessment

**Signs** (Check each that apply)

- Coughing
- Vomiting
- Difficulty Breathing
- Lethargy
- Anorexia
- Weight Loss

## Diagnosis

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## Treatments

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## Recommendations based on today’s assessment:

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## Home Care

Your veterinarian can help you determine the appropriate protocol for your cat based on its health, age and lifestyle.

Rechecks:

- if problem arises
- in \_\_\_\_\_ days
- in \_\_\_\_\_ months

## Kittens (0-1 year)

- Parasite Check & Prevention

## Adult & Senior Cats (1-7+ years)

- need the same as kittens, plus:
- Heartworm Prevention

## KNOW Heartworms Veterinary Hospital Awareness Contest

(YOU MAY SUBMIT THIS FORM ONLINE ON THE PROGRAM WEB SITE AT [WWW.KNOWHEARTWORMS.ORG](http://WWW.KNOWHEARTWORMS.ORG). PHOTOS ARE WELCOMED AND ENCOURAGED.)

Show the veterinary profession how you successfully implemented a **KNOW Heartworms** campaign in your practice. A judging panel representing the American Heartworm Society (AHS), the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) and Pfizer Animal Health will select the winning practices. Criteria used to evaluate each hospital campaign will be how successful you were in educating clients about feline heartworm disease and Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease (HARD). Membership in AAFP or AHS is not a requirement for eligibility.

Prizes will be awarded to the top three veterinary practices. The first-place winner will receive a \$1,500 stipend toward attending the 2007 American Heartworm Society Symposium in conjunction with the AVMA convention in Washington, D.C., July 13-15, 2007, or the Fall AAFP Meeting in Austin, Texas, November 11-13, 2007, and a complimentary one-year membership in both organizations. The second-place winner will receive a \$500 stipend toward the AHS or AAFP meeting. The third-place winner will receive complimentary memberships in both organizations. All hospitals will be featured in a press release announcing the winners, which will be distributed to veterinary trade publications and their local media. All entries must be postmarked by May 1, 2007. Winners will be announced June 1, 2007.

Practice Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Person Submitting Entry: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Web Site: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### HARD COPIES SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO:

The KNOW Heartworms Contest  
P.O. BOX 22529  
KANSAS CITY, MO 64113

This information may be used to educate other veterinarians. No submissions will be returned. Your entry is your consent to allow your materials to be used.

\_\_\_\_\_ AHS Member

\_\_\_\_\_ AAFP Member

(Note: You do not need to be a member to enter.)

### Clinic Activities (How did you promote heartworm prevention in your clinic? Please check all that apply.)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information Display                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Clinic Communications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heartworm Prevention Product Display | <input type="checkbox"/> Client Mailing        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Open House                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____           |

How many healthcare team members participated in the promotion?

How did you require healthcare team members to learn about the updated AHS Feline Guidelines?

What were the tasks assigned to each member?

Describe how you decorated your clinic:

Describe any events you held:

Describe any promotions you employed:

### Results

How many more feline heartworm tests did you conduct?

How many more clients accepted heartworm prevention medication?

### Community Outreach

(How did you promote heartworm prevention in your community? Please check all that apply.)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Presentations | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Cat Shows |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper Coverage   | <input type="checkbox"/> Cat Clubs       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____          |  |

### Publicity

Did you submit an article to local print media or conduct any local interviews? Explain:

### Online Promotions

Describe how you used your Web site and email to educate cat owners:

### Creativity

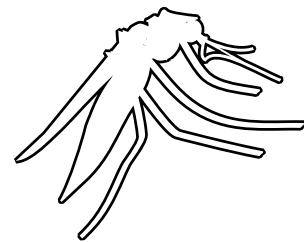
How did you use the materials provided in the **KNOW Heartworms** kit and/or at [www.knowheartworms.org](http://www.knowheartworms.org)?

What did you do to add your own unique elements?

**Hey Kids!**

Heartworm disease is serious business, but learning to protect your cat can be fun.

Circle all the words in the word search below.



**Word Search**

L K I T T E N J R O  
 S Y M D V O L C W D  
 W F V Z E U M H A I  
 H E A R T W O R M A  
 I L C B E T S X D G  
 S I C Q R V Q K Y N  
 K N I T I L U N G O  
 E E N L N F I E M S  
 R R A U A P T G W E  
 S O T J R R O Y S V  
 K O I F I C V H R A  
 A D O T A M C A T P  
 U T N W N A I Y E B  
 R U I N D O O R W E  
 P O E T I S A R A P

- Veterinarian
- Vaccination
- Heartworm
- Feline
- Mosquito
- Kitten
- Whiskers
- Cat
- Diagnose
- Larvae
- Indoor
- Outdoor
- Lung
- Parasite



**Help Ginger find her color!**

It seems that Ginger has lost her color. Can you help Ginger find it again by using crayons or colored pencils to color her back in?

**Know The Danger Your Cat Faces**

Did you know one mosquito bite can infect your cat with heartworm, a potentially destructive and insidious disease? The American Heartworm Society (AHS) and the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) are teaming up to get this urgent message out to cat owners through the **KNOW Heartworms** campaign. The campaign messages center on the five myths and misunderstandings about feline heartworm:

**#1—Dogs vs. Cats**

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**

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**

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. Larvae**

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

**#5—Diagnosis**

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

According to Charles Thomas Nelson, DVM, president of the AHS, both the veterinary community and the cat-owning public have a long way to go in developing awareness about the serious risks of feline heartworm. Studies indicate that less than 5 percent of U.S. households with cats regularly administer heartworm prevention. In contrast, 59 percent of dog-owning households regularly use a heartworm prevention product.

James R. Richards, DVM, director of the Feline Health Center at Cornell University and a past president of the AAFP, adds, "That's why it is important we be aware of the range of risks a cat can face and make sure that they receive regular check-ups. As we're learning with heartworm, the dangers are much more significant than we'd previously thought."

"This is a very preventable disease," says Nelson. "This education program and the supporting materials are based upon the latest, ongoing research conducted around the world."

Most veterinarians recommend year-round heartworm prevention, even in seasonal areas. One reason for this is compliance—making sure the medicine has been given properly by the pet owner. Surveys show that probably only 75 percent of the doses that are prescribed are given. But, even if doses are accidentally skipped, by giving preventives year-round the retroactive effectiveness is increased, and it's possible to actually stop most worms from developing into adults. Also, several of the monthly heartworm preventives have activity against some intestinal parasites, which infect 3 to 6 million people every year.

| Signs Associated with HARD:<br>Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease |                  |
|---|------------------|
| anorexia  | fainting         |
| blindness   | lethargy         |
| collapse  | rapid heart rate |
| convulsions   | sudden death     |
| coughing  | vomiting         |
| diarrhea  | weight loss      |
| difficulty breathing  |                  |

## Promote Heartworm Education To Clients

Create a bulletin board highlighting all the new information about feline heartworm disease and HARD (Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease).



Distribute the brochures to all cat owners.



Display the poster in your lobby along with the flip chart and window cling decal.



Photocopy the enclosed Kid's Korner activity sheet to hand out and educate children about feline heartworm disease. Use the balloons to decorate your clinic.



Wear the buttons and talk about the campaign and the importance of prevention.



Remind cat owners with a postcard to bring in their cat for annual check-ups and heartworm prevention.

All of these materials are available for download at [www.knowheartworms.org](http://www.knowheartworms.org).

