

Combat Heartworm

Prevent this mosquito-borne parasite from wreaking havoc on your cat's health.

By Fran Pennock Shaw

Heartworm, long considered a dog's disease, now is recognized as a deadly threat to cats, too. Fortunately, this mosquito-borne disease is entirely preventable.

"It's so easy for owners to prevent, but compliance is pretty low," says Tom Nelson, DVM, of the Animal Medical Center in Anniston, Ala., past president of the American Heartworm Society (AHS) and board member of the Companion Animal Parasite Council (CAPC). People should understand that the four drugs approved for cats "all work extremely well when given every month [and] are all very safe," he adds.

"It's much more effective to prevent than to try to remedy heartworm disease," agrees Jane Brunt, DVM, of the Cat Hospital at Towson in Baltimore, a past president of the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP). She urges using preventives year-round — not just during mosquito season — and says that broad-spectrum topicals "can take care of mosquitoes, as well as fleas, roundworms, hookworms, ear mites and other parasites."

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