

Cat Owners Urged to Protect Against Worms

Internal parasite risk runs high for pets in warmer weather.

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Parasite-transmitting mosquitoes put cats at risk, regardless of whether cats are kept indoors. For pet owners, the onset of warmer weather means more than blooming flowers and sunshine. The danger of parasite-transmitting mosquitoes runs high in warmer weather, regardless of whether pets are kept indoors.

Parasites such as heartworms, hookworms, roundworms and tapeworms harm pets year-round, and parasite control is necessary for cat and dog owners, says Bob Walker, spokesman for Bayer Animal Health.

While many dog owners are aware of the risks, cat owners may not realize the importance of helping their feline friends fend off parasites, he says. According to a recent survey by the American Pet Product Manufacturers Association, more than a third of the 90 million cats in the United States have not been to a veterinarian in the past year.

“Just because you have an indoor cat, you aren’t risk-free,” Walker says. “What we’re trying to do is raise awareness that parasite control is not just an issue that people with dogs face, it is very much an issue for people that own cats as well.”

In response to the need for increased awareness of the risks of feline heartworm disease, veterinarians say monthly preventive medications remain the best way to protect cats against parasites. Veterinarian Marty Becker urges cat owners to safeguard against potential hazards that may lurk in their backyards and neighborhoods, such as standing water, openings that let mosquitoes inside and even other pets.

“The APPMA survey results should be considered a wake-up call to cat owners,” Becker says. “As the temperature warms outside and people open doors and windows, mosquitoes can come in, and transmit potentially fatal heartworm to your cat.”

This time of year serves as a reminder to consult a veterinarian about establishing a preventive monthly regimen, he says, to create a constant barrier against parasites.

“Parasites are harmful for the cat itself and also could have implications for the home,” Walker says.