

Heartworm Prevention Guidelines for Cats Released

The AHS has release its “2007 Guidelines for the Diagnosis, Prevention and Management of Heartworm Infection in Cats” document.

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The American Heartworm Society (AHS) has released its “2007 Guidelines for the Diagnosis, Prevention and Management of Heartworm Infection in Cats” document that educates pet owners about heartworm infection in cats and how to prevent it.

The AHS is asking cat owners to view the guidelines here, and initiate dialogue with their veterinarians to assess their pet's risk.

“Each year cats die needlessly from complications related to this preventable disease. We are spreading the word and making these guidelines available to everyone, so the entire veterinary profession and the pet-owning public has access to the information,” American Heartworm Society President Tom Nelson, DVM, said.

Among the issues addressed in the guidelines:

Is it Heartworm?

Some cats never exhibit clinical signs of heartworm disease, but when signs are evident, they sometimes resemble symptoms usually associated with allergic bronchitis. This occurrence is because of a syndrome newly defined as Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease, the AHS says.

Year-round prevention is supported.

Many veterinarians recommend year-round heartworm prevention, even in seasonal areas. Surveys show only 75 percent of prescribed doses are given, but administering preventives year-round increases effectiveness, and it is possible to actually stop worms from developing into adults. Several monthly heartworm preventives also are active against some intestinal parasites.

Interpreting test results is important.

Heartworm infection in cats is harder to diagnose than it is in dogs and it is easy to overlook. Diagnostic tests have limitations, so negative test results do not necessarily rule out an infection.

Education is key.

To help communicate this new information and increase public awareness, the AHS is embarking on a public awareness campaign in partnership with the American Association of Feline Practitioners. The campaign is called KNOW Heartworms. Click here for more information on KNOW Heartworms.