

## Mosquito Protection for Your Cat

**As mosquito season approaches, owners should be aware of the risk of heartworm disease.**

Posted: April 11 2008 2 a.m. EDT

As temperatures grow warmer, the American Heartworm Society wants every pet owner to be prepared for mosquito season and the heartworm disease risk it carries for pets.

Although the risk of heartworm disease is heightened in warmer months when the mosquito population increases, the AHS recommends year-round prevention for cats and dogs. By giving heartworm prevention every month, forgetful pet owners will have their pets protected when they need it most.

“Surveys show only about 75 percent of pets are given the full dosage recommended by a veterinarian,” says Sheldon Rubin, DVM., AHS president and a practitioner in Chicago. “With year-round prevention, if doses are accidentally skipped, the drug is still effective.”

Recently, researchers discovered that respiratory signs in cats, which are often diagnosed as feline asthma or allergic bronchitis, may actually be caused by the presence of heartworms in either larval or adult stages. The acronym “HARD” is the term for this clinical presentation and stands for Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease.

Heartworm preventive medications are the only option for cats, as there is no approved treatment for feline heartworm disease.

Heartworm disease treatments are available for dogs, but treating for heartworms is much more costly and dangerous to the animal than simply preventing it. Yet another reason to use year-round prevention is that many heartworm preventives also fight against other intestinal and common parasites, such as roundworms and fleas.

Options for preventing heartworm infection in dogs and cats include daily and monthly tablets and chewables, as well as monthly topicals. These medications interrupt heartworm development before larvae and adult worms reach the lungs and cause disease. When administered properly and on a timely schedule, heartworm infection can be prevented.

For more information about heartworm prevention, diagnosis and treatment for the disease, visit the AHS website.