

Studies Show Need for Parasite Prevention Awareness

Heartworm and intestinal parasites are prevalent in cats and other animals, surveys say.

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Three studies conducted throughout the past year say that heartworm and intestinal parasites remain prevalent across the United States, highlighting the need for improved pet owner parasite prevention awareness, according to Novartis Animal Health U.S. Inc., which researches, develops and markets animal treatments.

Novartis Animal Health says the three surveys — two conducted by the company and one by the Louisiana State University (LSU) School of Veterinary Medicine — show that parasite prevalence is high and compliance with preventives is low.

Novartis' survey of more than 1,000 veterinary clinics in 11 western U.S. states found that heartworm is a definite issue in that region of the country. Forty-nine percent of the responding clinics reported heartworm positive cases of cats and other animals, totaling more than 2,300 incidents of heartworm in pets in 2005.

Novartis Animal Health's other study was of more than 350 animal shelters across the country that received cats and other pets displaced by hurricanes in the Gulf region. It found a majority of the rescued pets tested positive for heartworm and intestinal parasites.

Pets had been relocated from the Gulf region to shelters in 20 different states, including California, Minnesota, New York and North Carolina.

"These studies do demonstrate that heartworm and intestinal parasites are endemic throughout most of the U.S., including regions where prevalence is historically thought to be low," said Novartis Animal Health Director of Professional Relations David Stansfield, BVSc, MRCVS. "Add to that the national average for compliance with heartworm preventives — five out of 12 months — and the magnitude of the issue is evident."