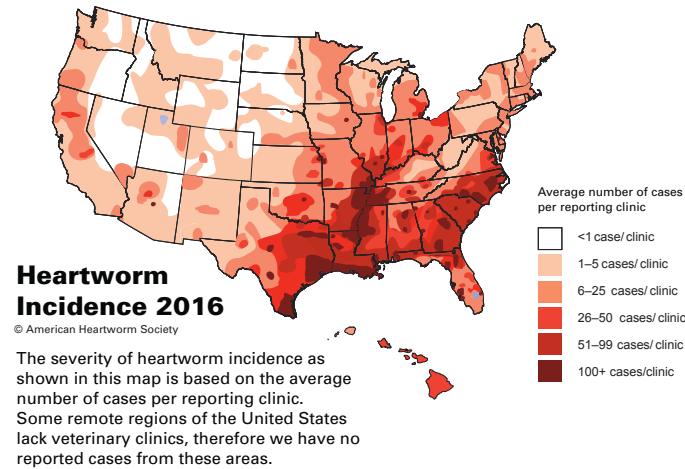

Did you know?

- **Heartworms are spread by mosquitoes**—if there are mosquitoes in your area, your cat is at risk!
- **Wildlife in your area can be a source of infection.** Mosquitoes that bite an infected dog, fox, wolf, or coyote can then transmit the infection to unprotected cats.
- **Even cats that look healthy can be infected with heartworms.** Annual examination and testing when warranted can avoid delays in detection and therapy, as heartworms can cause significant damage to your cat's heart and lungs.
- **Heartworm preventive medications are very effective** when given properly on the prescribed schedule.
- **The best way to reduce the risk of heartworm infection in your cat is to give the preventive medication year-round.** Mosquitoes can survive 12 months a year, even indoors and in parts of the country where there is a cold winter. All cats are at risk, even those that do not go outside.
- **There is no cure for heartworm disease in cats.** While medical management of clinical signs is possible, some infected cats die without warning. Prevention is always safer and more affordable than managing complications from chronic diseases caused by heartworms.



Heartworm disease is found in all 50 states.



The cornerstone of heartworm management is prevention.

The American Heartworm Society recommends year-round administration of a heartworm preventive medication in dogs, cats, and ferrets and annual testing for heartworm disease for all dogs.



To learn more about the increasing threat of heartworm disease, talk to your veterinarian and visit the American Heartworm Society website at www.heartwormsociety.org.

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What You Need to Know About Heartworm Disease and Your Newly Adopted Cat



Keep Them Safe. Love Them Always.

Prepared by the American Heartworm Society and the Association of Shelter Veterinarians

Congratulations on the adoption of your new family member!

Rescuing and rehoming animals is a team effort, and we would not be able to save animals if it were not for dedicated adopters like you! **Thank you.**

Along with the joys of pet ownership come responsibilities, and one of the most important of these is protecting your cat against heartworm disease. Even cats that live indoors are at risk!

Whether the preventive medication is given orally or topically, all approved heartworm preventives work to keep your cat from developing heartworm disease. Preventives work by eliminating the youngest worms in the first few weeks after they have been deposited by mosquitoes.

We recommend taking your cat to your veterinarian for annual physical examinations and getting preventive medication to use all year long.



Has my new cat been tested for heartworm disease?

We do not routinely test cats for heartworm disease; confirming a diagnosis is a lot more complicated than it is in dogs. The antigen test routinely used in dogs can also be used in cats to detect mature adult female worms. An antibody blood test can also be used to detect infection from larval stages and immature worms.

A positive antigen test indicates that adult heartworms are present, but a positive antibody test cannot distinguish between a recently infected cat and one that was infected sometime in the past (and may no longer have an infection). Testing cats for microfilariae (the baby worms) is not reliable because 1. some have only male or female worms, 2. some worms do not live long enough to reproduce, and 3. when microfilariae are produced they are usually cleared from the blood by the cat's immune system within about a month.

A positive antigen or antibody test can alert us that a cat is at risk of having or developing heartworm-associated respiratory disease (HARD). A negative result to either test does not rule out the possibility of infection; false negative results are common in cats. Confirming a diagnosis often requires blood tests, x-rays, and ultrasound imaging of the heart.

What will I learn when I take my cat to my veterinarian?

Your veterinarian may recommend screening for heartworm disease as a component of a comprehensive preventive care plan. Signs of feline HARD can mimic many common diseases of cats, such as hairballs, asthma, or pneumonia. Signs of disease can include loss of appetite, sluggishness, intermittent vomiting, coughing, wheezing, and respiratory distress. Signs may be mild or they can be very severe, depending on the individual cat's condition. Your veterinarian will likely recommend testing to rule out HARD if you observe any of these signs.

Your veterinarian should recommend administering a heartworm preventive medication for the life of your new pet. Whether the preventive is given orally or topically, all approved heartworm preventives work to keep your cat from developing heartworm disease and HARD.

What if my cat is diagnosed with heartworm disease?

Unfortunately, no medications exist for the safe treatment of adult heartworms in cats. In some circumstances, surgical removal of heartworms has been successful; however, this surgical procedure is difficult and risky.



The best option is the routine use of heartworm preventives to inhibit development of infection. Many cats that develop HARD can be successfully managed with medications to reduce inflammation and minimize clinical signs of disease. The American Heartworm Society recommends that cats diagnosed with heartworms have blood tests conducted every 6 to 12 months to monitor infection status.

Will you take the cat back or pay for treatment of heartworm disease?

We are grateful to you for partnering with us to save this cat's life! As much as we would like to treat our shelter animals for all of their conditions, we simply cannot afford to do so. Please speak to a member of our staff for information on our post-adoption medical expense policies.

The veterinarians listed below understand the reasons for our testing policy and are happy to see recently adopted cats.

Please make an appointment today.