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Countless cat owners throughout the United States are misinformed about feline heartworm disease – posing serious risk to their feline friends. Cats may be misdiagnosed with feline asthma, or test negative for heartworm antigens and antibodies but still have heartworms in their systems. Now, due to new research, veterinarians recognize this infectious agent is doing a whole lot more damage than previously thought.

This media kit, in addition to the Web site, www.knowheartworms.org, includes information to help raise awareness among cat owners about the importance of understanding heartworm disease, defined as H.A.R.D. (Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease), and the need for prevention.

The **KNOW Heartworms** campaign is a public awareness campaign sponsored by the American Heartworm Society (AHS) and the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP), and funded by an educational grant from Pfizer Animal Health. The program stresses the importance of understanding the five myths and misunderstandings about feline heartworm disease:

- **Dogs vs. Cats:** Heartworm is not just a canine disease, and it affects cats differently than dogs.
- **Indoor vs. Outdoor Cats:** Heartworm disease is mosquito-borne and evidence has shown indoor cats are just as susceptible to it as outdoor animals. In a North Carolina study, 28 percent of the cats diagnosed with heartworm were inside-only cats.
- **It's a Heart Disease:** "Heartworm disease" is a misnomer; it mostly affects the lungs, not just the heart. The disease frequently is mistaken for asthma and other respiratory diseases.
- **Adult Heartworms vs. Larvae:** New research shows that heartworm larvae at all stages, not just adult worms, can cause serious health problems.
- **Diagnosis:** Accurate diagnosis can be difficult, since negative antigen and antibody tests don't automatically rule out the presence of heartworms.

For more information or to schedule an interview about the campaign, please contact Lea-Ann Germinder, APR, lgerminder@germinder.com, or Leanne Breiby, leanneb@germinder.com, or call Germinder & Associates, Inc. at 816-822-0192.



American Heartworm
Society



American Association of
Feline Practitioners