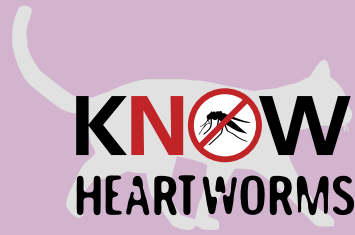


## Can I tell if my cat has heartworm?

### Signs Associated With HARD:

#### Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease

- Anorexia
- Blindness
- Collapse
- Convulsions
- Coughing
- Diarrhea
- Difficulty breathing
- Fainting
- Lethargy
- Rapid heart rate
- Sudden death
- Vomiting
- Weight loss



# The Secret Is Out on Feline Heartworm Disease

## What can I do?

Heartworm disease is harmful, even fatal, but very preventable. Ask your veterinarian for current recommendations regarding year-round, broad spectrum heartworm preventives for your cat. Even if doses are accidentally skipped, by giving preventives year-round the retroactive effectiveness is increased, and it is possible to actually stop most worms from developing into adults.



For more information,  
please visit  
[www.knowheartworms.org](http://www.knowheartworms.org)



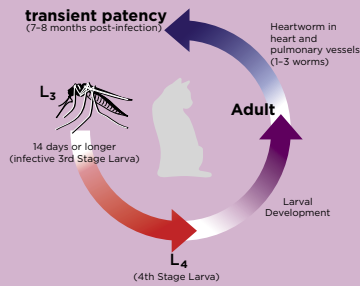
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Proactive prevention is the  
only sure way to protect  
cats



## How does a cat get heartworm?

Heartworm infection takes place when a mosquito carrying microscopic-size heartworm larvae bites a cat. The larvae enter through the bite wound where they develop in the tissues. The immature worms then enter a blood vessel and are carried to the arteries in the lung where they cause an inflammatory reaction. Most worms die at this stage, causing even more inflammation. The worms that progress to the adult stage may live undetected for a couple of years. But, when the adult worms die, the inflammation can be severe enough to cause death. The respiratory signs associated with these reactions are called Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease (HARD).



## What should I KNOW about heartworms?

One study conducted in the Texas Gulf Coast region in the late 1990s revealed heartworm antibodies were present in 26 percent of the cats examined, indicating the cats were infected at some point in their lives. Adult worms were present in 10 percent. The rate of heartworm infection was significantly higher than that of feline leukemia virus infection at 5 percent, and feline immunodeficiency virus infection at 6 percent.

The American Heartworm Society and the American Association of Feline Practitioners have launched a joint campaign, funded by an educational grant from Pfizer, to promote awareness of the serious danger of heartworm disease in cats that reveals itself as HARD. The **KNOW Heartworms** campaign is a public awareness program to educate veterinarians and cat owners on the real threat of heartworm and the importance of prevention.

# The Five Myths and Misunderstandings: **REVEALED**

## #1—Dogs vs. Cats

**I thought heartworm was mainly a dog's disease.**

Heartworm disease is not just a canine disease. Heartworms affect cats differently than dogs, but the disease they cause is equally serious.

## #2—Indoor vs. Outdoor Cats

**But my cat stays indoors, so she is safe, right?**

It only takes one mosquito to infect a cat, and because mosquitoes can get indoors, both indoor and outdoor cats are at risk and should receive heartworm preventive medication. In a North Carolina study, 28 percent of the cats diagnosed with heartworm were inside-only cats.

## #3—It's a Heart Disease

**How does it affect my cat?**

The name "heartworm disease" is a misnomer, as it mostly affects the lungs and not just the heart. Signs are often mistaken for feline asthma, allergic bronchitis or other respiratory diseases.

## #4—Adult Heartworms vs. Larvae

**What if the heartworm larvae never develop into adult worms?**

Cats do not need an adult heartworm to exhibit clinical signs; in fact, larvae are a main cause of the problems. Studies show 50 percent of cats infected with heartworm larvae have significant disease of the small arteries supplying blood to the lungs.

## #5—Diagnosis

**Is it easy to test whether my cat has heartworm disease?**

Diagnosis is difficult as negative antigen and antibody tests do not rule out heartworm disease. Positive tests, however, are significant.

