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HEARTWORM DISEASE

Heartworm disease is a serious and potentially fatal parasitic disease that can affect both dogs and cats. It is caused by the parasitic worm *Dirofilaria immitis*, which is transmitted through the bites of infected mosquitoes.

In dogs, Heartworm disease is a major health concern and is prevalent throughout the United States and other parts of the world. The worms can grow up to 12 inches in length and live in the heart, lungs, and blood vessels of infected dogs, leading to serious health problems such as heart failure, lung disease, and damage to other organs in the body. **Symptoms of Heartworm disease in dogs may include:**

- **Coughing.**
- **Lethargy.**
- **Weight loss.**
- **Difficulty breathing.**
- **Reduced appetite.**

In cats, Heartworm disease is less common than in dogs, but it can still be a serious and life-threatening condition. **Cats are not the natural host of the Heartworm parasite**, and as a result, the worms do not usually grow as large in cats as they do in dogs. However, even a small number of worms can cause significant damage to a cat's heart and lungs, leading to respiratory distress and sudden death. **Symptoms of Heartworm disease in cats may include:**

- **Coughing**
- **Vomiting**
- **Difficulty breathing**
- **Sudden collapse.**

Prevention is key in protecting both dogs and cats from heartworm disease. Monthly Heartworm preventatives, which are available as chewable tablets, topical treatments, and injections, are highly effective at preventing Heartworm infection. It is important to give these preventatives to pets year-round, as mosquitoes can still be active during cooler months. Testing for Heartworm disease is also important, as early detection and treatment can prevent serious complications and potentially fatal outcomes.

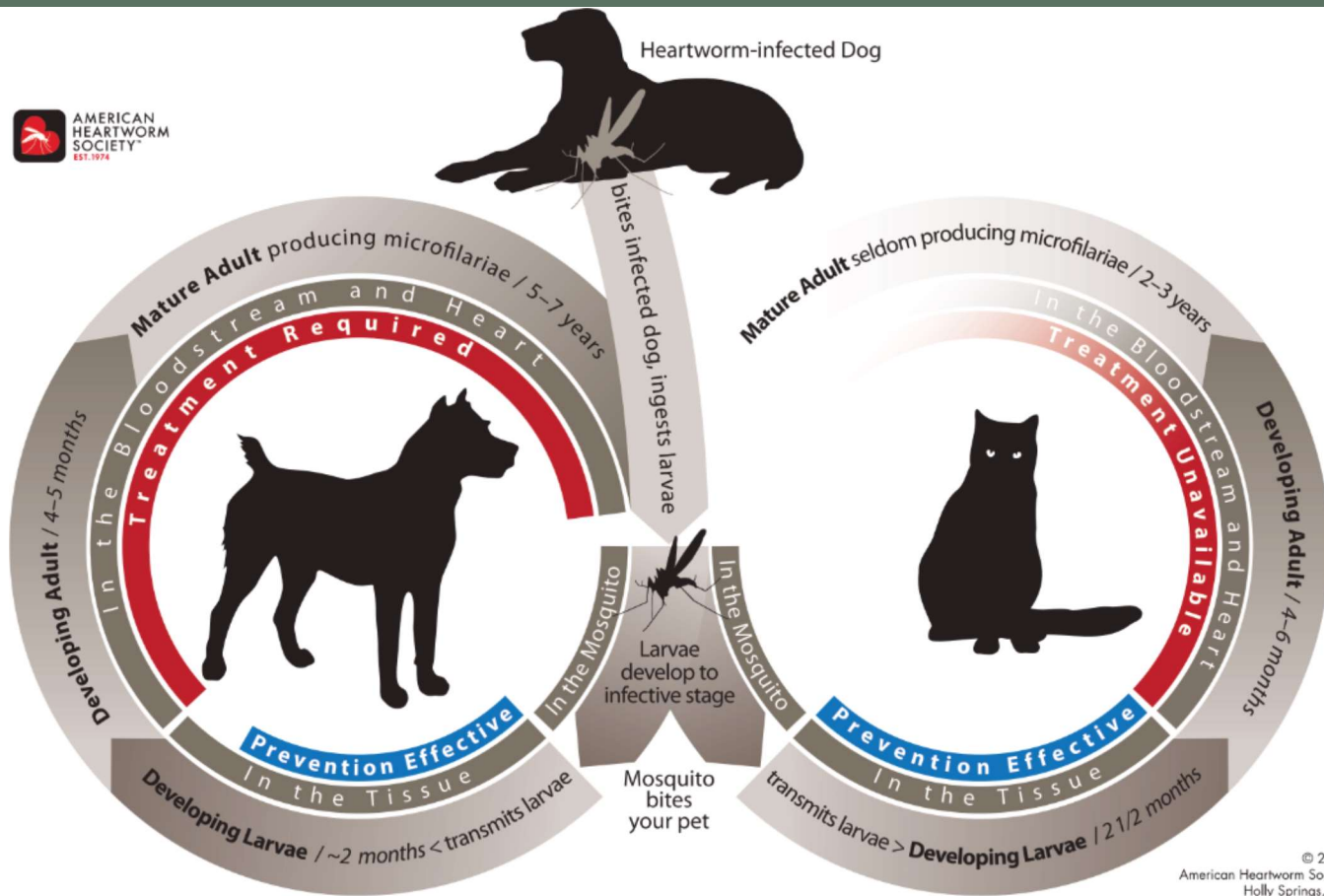
If your pet is diagnosed with Heartworm disease, treatment may involve medication to kill the adult worms and larvae, as well as careful monitoring and follow-up testing to ensure that the infection has been successfully treated. On top of the aggressive medications, your pet would also be on restricted cage rest for months to prevent any spikes in blood pressure or increased workload on the heart. In severe cases, surgery may be necessary to remove the worms from the heart and lungs.

Overall, Heartworm disease is a serious and potentially fatal condition that can affect both dogs and cats. By taking preventative measures and getting regular testing for your pet, you can help ensure that they stay healthy and free from Heartworm disease.



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2022 HEARTWORM INCIDENCE



© American Heartworm Society The severity of heartworm incidence as shown in this map is based on the average number of cases per reporting clinic. Some remote regions of the United States lack veterinary clinics, therefore we have no reported cases from these areas.

