

# ANIMAL HOSPITAL OF LANESVILLE

1849 Highway 11 Lanesville, IN 47136 (812) 952-3643

## Protecting Your Cat from Heartworms

By Dr. Rene Wingerter

Here are some key facts you need to know about heartworm disease in cats:

- The estimated infection rate for cats in our area is about 1 in 100.
- Infected cats may show signs of asthma, stomach upset, or weight loss, but most often the only symptom is sudden death.
- Treatment for cats is extremely dangerous. As many as one out of three die from complications.
- Heartworms can now be easily prevented by giving a tasty treat once a month or by applying an ointment to the back of the neck once a month that also prevents fleas, ear mites and roundworms.

Whenever a mosquito bites your cat, it may be infecting him with heartworm larvae. These larvae travel to the heart and pulmonary arteries where they grow to be as long as 18 inches. When these worms die, they can cause serious allergic reactions in your cat. The lungs may fill up with fluid and your cat may suffocate in a matter of minutes. Unfortunately this can happen when the worm dies of natural causes or when it dies during treatment, so preventing infection is the safest course.

Unlike dogs, your cat does not need to be tested before going on the preventative. Your cat should be tested if he is showing any symptoms of the disease (coughing, trouble breathing, weight loss, lethargy, vomiting). Indoor cats have been found to be infected at virtually the same rate as outdoor cats.

Until recently there were no products on the market for preventing heartworms in cats. Now there are three, Heartgard, Interceptor and Revolution. If you keep your cat on a preventative for the rest of his life, you will not have to worry about this potentially deadly disease.

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If you have any questions, please call us at the Animal Hospital of Lanesville at 952-3643. 🐾