

Feline Heartworm Disease

Cats also get heartworms. Both indoor and outdoor cats seem to be susceptible to infection with this mosquito transmitted parasite. Cats are much more resistant than dogs to infection, and they are also very good at killing the larval stage. Unfortunately, damage results from the larvae reaching the lungs and being destroyed there. Asthma-like symptoms often occur in response to exposure. Some of the typical symptoms are coughing, vomiting, difficulty breathing, lack of appetite, lethargy, weight loss, and sudden death.

Because cats are not the natural host for heartworms, diagnosing heartworm disease in cats can be fairly difficult. A blood test for heartworm antibody indicates whether your cat has been exposed to heartworms. A blood test for heartworm antigen may indicate that exposure has then led to adult development and infection. An echocardiogram (ultrasound of the heart), chest x-rays, and a white blood cell count may be helpful in confirming a diagnosis.

Symptoms of heartworm disease can often be managed with medications, but the drugs used to cure the disease in dogs are often fatal in cats. Luckily, there is a heartworm preventative for cats. Heartworm preventative is recommended for all cats who have exposure to mosquitoes.