

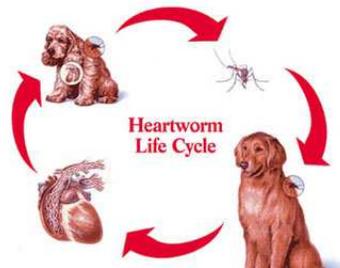
Rainy Weather Brings Mosquitoes, Heartworm Concern

By Jennifer Bolser, DVM Humane Society of Boulder Valley Veterinary Clinic

With all of the heavy rains we've had this summer there are increased numbers of standing pools of water that are breeding more mosquitoes than usual in Boulder Valley. Mosquitoes carry and transmit many diseases, including heartworm. Heartworm is a serious and life-threatening parasite transmitted between dogs by mosquitoes. The moment heartworm-transmitting mosquitoes bite your dog, larvae are transferred into the bloodstream where they will incubate and mature. This is the onset of heartworm disease. If left ignored, these microscopic larvae will develop into large worms inside your dogs heart and eventually cause a serious, deadly condition.

What Are the Signs of Heartworm Disease?

In the early stages, there are few clinical symptoms of the disease. As the heartworms grow and accumulate the worms migrate to the arteries and eventually to the heart and lungs. This can cause severe lung inflammation and heart failure. Symptoms of more advanced heartworm disease include a mild, persistent cough, lethargy, fatigue after mild to moderate exercise, reduced appetite and weight loss.



How Is Heartworm Disease Detected?

Heartworm infection in dogs can be detected with a simple blood test by your veterinarian.

Are Cats Affected?

Mosquitoes can transmit heartworm larvae to cats, however, heartworms do not mature and reproduce well in the cats. Thus, infected cats do not typically have symptoms nor progress to a life-threatening condition. Preventative medication is available for cats and may be recommended depending on where you live and your cat's lifestyle.

Prevention Is Key

Heartworm is agonizing to treat, but easy to prevent. We recommend that pet guardians take steps now to talk to their veterinarians about how to best protect their pets from this dangerous disease. Heartworm prevention is safe, easy and inexpensive. While treatment for dogs with active heartworm disease is possible, it can be a complicated and expensive process, taking months for infected dogs to recover.

There are a variety of options for preventing heartworm infection in both dogs and cats, including monthly chewable tablets and monthly topical applications. All of these methods are extremely effective, and when administered properly on a timely schedule, heartworm infection can be completely prevented. These medications interrupt heartworm development before adult worms reach the lungs and cause disease.

The key to prevention is compliance and maintaining the monthly preventative program recommended by your veterinarian. Creating calendar or smart phone reminders to help remind you to give the medication is a tool to help you keep this responsibility. Our pets are counting on us to protect them from this preventable disease.

For more information about heartworm disease, visit the American Heartworm Society website www.heartwormsociety.org and see your veterinarian for your pet's testing and the monthly preventative. Get started today by scheduling your pet's appointment. If you need a veterinarian, contact the Humane Society of Boulder Valley's Veterinary Clinic or call (303) 442-4030.

Jennifer Bolser, DVM is the Chief Clinic Veterinarian for the Humane Society of Boulder Valley's full-service public veterinary clinic. The clinic is located at 2323 55th Street in Boulder. Info: www.boulderhumane.org