

Heartworm Disease

Heartworm is a serious, life-threatening disease that can affect dogs, cats, ferrets and wild canids. If untreated, it can lead to heart disease, damage to the lungs, and death. Heartworm disease is almost 100% preventable.

Transmission

Heartworm disease is caused by the parasite *Dirofilaria immitis*. Mosquitoes carry the parasite from animal to animal.

Risk Factors

Cases of heartworm are regularly reported throughout the state of Oregon, and all dogs are at risk, even pets that live primarily indoors. Mosquito populations are capable of rising rapidly if conditions are warm and wet. Your pet's exposure to parasite-carrying mosquitoes increases with outdoor activities in areas that have high mosquito counts, such as Southern Oregon.

Symptoms

- ▶ **Dogs:** Chronic cough (most common symptom and a sign of advanced illness), lack of energy or endurance, difficulty breathing, loss of appetite or weight loss
- ▶ **Cats:** Cough, difficulty breathing, vomiting, sluggishness or weight loss

Prevention is Key

A yearly veterinary examination coupled with preventive treatment is recommended. There are a wide variety of options for preventing heartworm infection, including medications that also protect your pet from other parasites, including fleas, ticks, ear mites, and other worms.

Prevention is a good choice for your pet, especially when compared to the risk and cost of treatment for heartworm disease.

