

Your cat and heartworms

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Feline heartworm disease is a potentially fatal and totally preventable disease. Cats contract heartworms by being bitten by an infected mosquito, which there are plenty of around our parts. Within six months, the heartworm larvae migrate to the heart and mature into adult heartworms that create turbulent blood flow (a heart murmur) and changes in the heart's blood pressure. Eventually, congestive heart failure can develop or sudden death can occur.

Cats cannot be treated with the same product that is used to kill adult heartworms in dogs. Veterinarians can only help to manage any respiratory symptoms that develop such as asthma-like wheezy breathing. It is important to remember that mosquitoes can enter into a house through opened doors or window screens so even indoor cats have exposure risk and should be considered for heartworm prevention to fully prevent the risk of developing heartworm disease.

Heartworm preventions work by killing the larval stage of the worm before it can migrate to the heart. Adverse effects of these heartworm preventatives are minimal and the lifesaving benefit makes them worth their expense. If you purchase these products through a veterinarian's office, you can even consider them an insurance policy against heartworm disease since the drug manufacturers' stand behind the effectiveness of their products. There are even reminder email programs that can be used to help you to remember your pet's monthly dose. So if your pet is not on a preventative, have them heartworm tested today and purchase one immediately.

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