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Has your pet got Heartworm?

Heartworm is a potentially fatal, infectious parasite that invades the blood stream of cats, dogs and, very occasionally, people. Mosquitoes spread the infective, juvenile stage and susceptible pets can become infected by one simple bite. Being kept away from other dogs and cats, using preventions only in the summer or being an 'indoor-only' pet are not suitable protections from this disease.

What are the signs of Heartworm infection?

As it is the heart and lungs that are targeted, the clinical signs of Heartworm disease are associated with the function of these organs. Coughing, panting, lethargy, an inability to exercise, collapse and sudden death are some of the signs associated with Heartworm disease.

It is important to remember, however, that it's possible for your pet to be infected for many years without showing any of these signs. *Just because they're not coughing does not mean they are clear of Heartworm!* Heartworm infection can be confirmed with a quick and easy blood test.

Is there a treatment for Heartworm infection?

If your pet has been unlucky enough to contract Heartworm disease, there is treatment available. This treatment involves 2 aspects, is costly and does involve a certain amount of risk.

Killing the adult Heartworm burden involves preparing your pet with 3 weeks of oral medication to thin their blood and prevent clotting. They then have a 48hr hospital visit where they receive two injections to kill the adult worms and are monitored closely for any side-effects before going on to another 3 weeks of oral medication.

The second aspect of any treatment involves assisting the damaged heart and lungs to cope. This might include antibiotics to fight infection, blood pressure medication to reduce the strain on the heart, airway-dilators to aid breathing and diuretics to allow your pet to pass any accumulated fluid.

How can Heartworm disease be prevented?

The good news about Heartworm disease is that prevention it is easy, cheap and effective. There are also several options available when it comes to how the prevention is given to your pet.

You can now give dogs monthly tablets or chews, a monthly topspot application that includes flea control, or take advantage of the once-a-year Heartworm injection. Cats also require Heartworm prevention and it is also available in a monthly topspot format.

***If your pet has been diagnosed with Heartworm; don't worry, treatment is available.
Prevention, however, is easier, cheaper and safer than cure.***

"Caring for the pets of Ipswich since 1967"

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