

Heartworm Awareness

True or False

Below are some of the top misconceptions and misunderstandings about heartworm disease in pets. Test your knowledge and learn how to keep your pet healthy!



Heartworms are actual worms that live in the heart and lungs of infected pets.

True. Heartworms are worms up to a foot-long that live inside the heart and lungs of pets. They cause lung disease, heart failure and even death if left untreated.

Initially, heartworms present no symptoms.

True. There will be no signs or symptoms of heartworm disease in the initial stages. However, as the disease progresses your pet will show signs such as developing a dry persistent cough, difficulty breathing, fatigue, and weight loss.

Heartworm can spread from contact with other pets.

False. Heartworms can only be transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito. It cannot be transmitted from pet-to-pet contact.

I don't need to test my pet annually for heartworms if they are regularly taking heartworm prevention.

False. There are no 100% guarantees that medicine will prevent heartworms. So, even if your pet is taking heartworm prevention as prescribed, you should still have your pet tested for heartworms annually.

Cats can get heartworm disease, too.

True. Although cats and even ferrets are less susceptible to heartworm disease, it is possible for them to become infected. This is why the American Heartworm Society recommends year-round heartworm prevention and annual checkups for cats and ferrets as well.

I don't have to give heartworm preventative to my pet during the colder months.

False. The American Heartworm Society recommends continuing heartworm prevention medicine in the colder months, and vets agree. The AHS states, "heartworm preventatives work by treating heartworms that already infected the pet within the past month or longer". So if you stop treatment during the winter months and your pet is infected unknowingly to you, heartworms will continue to thrive and cause everlasting bodily damage to your pet.

Heartworm disease is only prevalent in southern United States, or in places with a warm year round climate.

False. Although heartworm disease is much more prevalent in southern United States, heartworm has been diagnosed [in every state in the U.S.](#) It only takes one mosquito to infect a pet. So, even if your area is mostly mosquito free, there's still a chance your pet can get heartworms.