

CLIENT HEARTWORM INFORMATION SHEET

Heartworms are dangerous parasites that can live inside your pet's body and cause severe internal damage. Dogs and cats provide an ideal environment for heartworms, as the parasites feed on nutrients in the blood and reside deep within the body, making them impossible to physically remove once established. Although heartworm disease can lead to serious health issues, including heart and lung damage or even death, the good news is that it is both preventable and treatable with proper veterinary care. This handout is intended for informational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for an examination by a qualified veterinarian.

Here are some frequently asked questions:



How are Heartworms Transmitted?

Heartworms are **transmitted** by mosquitoes. Mosquitoes can travel up to approximately two miles, which means your pet is at risk if there are any heartworm-positive animals within that range. This includes both pets and wild animals, such as wolves and coyotes.

The heartworm **life cycle** takes four to six months to complete. Adult heartworms live in the heart and pulmonary arteries, causing irreversible damage to your pet's heart. Heartworm-positive dogs may be asymptomatic at first, as symptoms can take a year or longer to appear.

Cats can become infected with the same heartworms as dogs, but in cats, the worms often migrate to the lungs, causing Heartworm-Associated Respiratory Disease (HARD).



How do pets present symptomatically?

Heartworm disease can be detected with a simple in-clinic blood test. Early symptoms in dogs often include a dry, non-productive cough and a heart murmur, which occurs due to the worms' location in the heart and pulmonary arteries. As the disease progresses, it may lead to signs of heart failure, such as exercise intolerance, fluid accumulation in the abdomen (ascites), and swelling in the tissues (edema).

In cats, the signs of heartworm disease are often subtle or sudden. Common symptoms include a heart murmur, dry cough, open-mouth breathing at rest, or, in some cases, acute death with no prior warning.



How are Heartworms Prevented/Treated?

In dogs, heartworm disease is typically treated with two to three injections of Diroban, accompanied by a brief hospital stay. Pets are retested for heartworm disease three months after treatment, and full recovery usually takes about three months.

In cats, there is unfortunately no cure for heartworm disease. Treatment is limited to symptomatic management of respiratory issues and the immune response caused by the parasite.

There are several medications available to prevent heartworm disease in both dogs and cats. These include:

- Monthly pills
- Topical treatments
- Annual injections (for dogs)

For cats, prevention is typically administered as topical medication.

Pets must be tested for heartworms before starting prevention. Administering heartworm preventatives to a heartworm-positive pet can trigger a life-threatening anaphylactic reaction, caused by the rapid death of the parasites in the body.

The cost of treating heartworm disease once often exceeds the cost of years of prevention. Preventing heartworms is not only safer for your pet, but also far more affordable in the long run.

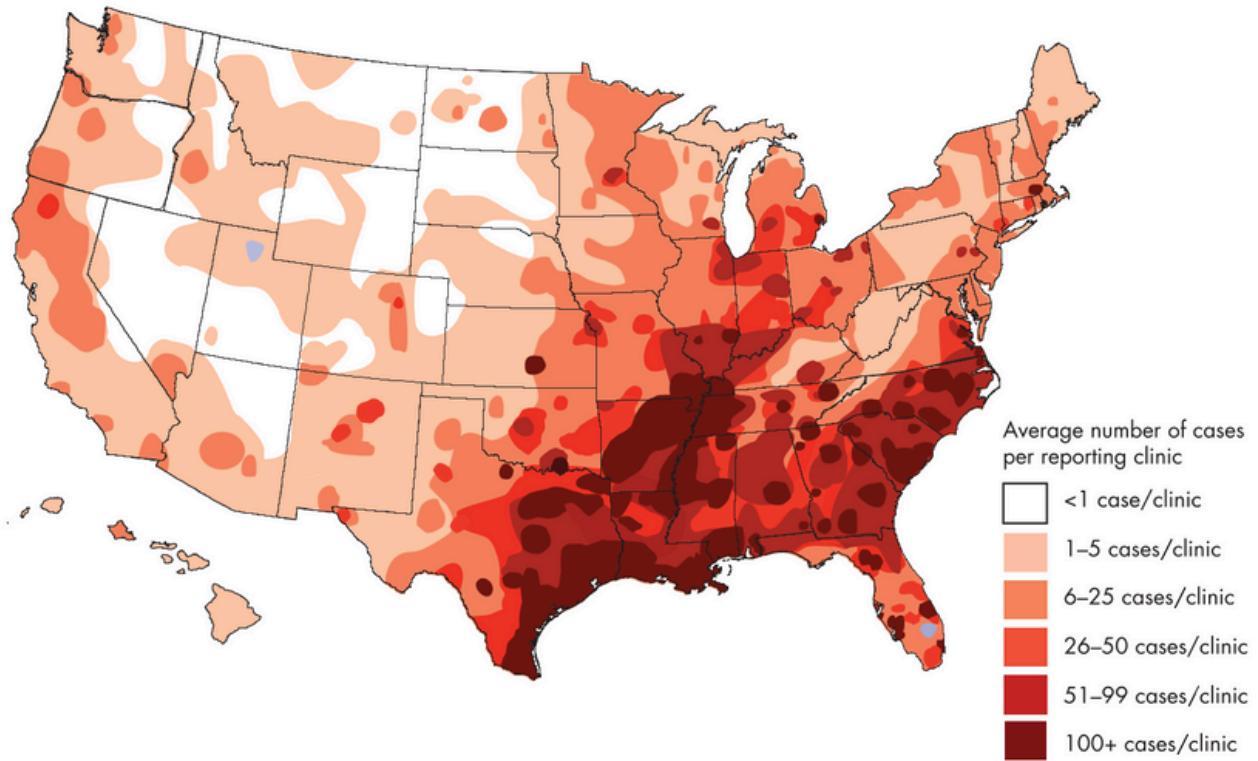


2022 HEARTWORM INCIDENCE



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© American Heartworm Society The severity of heartworm incidence as shown in this map is based on the average number of cases per reporting clinic.
Some remote regions of the United States lack veterinary clinics, therefore we have no reported cases from these areas.



INCIDENCIA DEL GUSANO DEL CORAZÓN EN 2022



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© American Heartworm Society La gravedad de la incidencia del gusano del corazón, como se muestra en este mapa, se basa en el número promedio de casos por clínica que informa.
Algunas regiones remotas de los Estados Unidos carecen de clínicas veterinarias, por lo que no tenemos casos reportados en estas áreas.

