

# SWVH Spring Newsletter

## Finally – it's Spring!

As the days get longer and warmer, pets and their owners are looking forward to spending more time outside. But more time outdoors can mean different risks for your animals. **April is National Heartworm Awareness Month.** With that in mind, the doctors and staff of SWVH want to take this opportunity to educate you about heartworm, a common disease of dogs and cats, and alert you to the current recommendations for prevention in Northern Nevada.

We've also enclosed, at the end of our Spring Newsletter, information about **special ways to save for our valued clients**, so be sure not to miss them!

As you may know, although it is much more commonly seen in dogs, **heartworm** is a preventable, but serious and potentially fatal, internal parasite that strikes both dogs and cats. As the name implies, heartworms live in the blood of a dog's or cat's heart and adjacent blood vessels. The adult heartworms living in the heart produce offspring, called microfilariae, which circulate in the infected animal's blood.

When a mosquito "bites" an infected pet, it sucks out blood containing the microfilariae. After about two weeks in the mosquito, the microfilariae become infective larvae. This step is necessary for the transmission of heartworm. When the mosquito bites another pet, the infective larvae are transmitted.



## CANINE HEARTWORM

Recently or mildly infected dogs with heartworm may show no signs of illness until the adults worms have developed in the heart and adjacent vessels. As the disease progresses your dog may cough, become lethargic, lose its appetite or have difficulty breathing.

Some owners report that their dog tires rapidly after only moderate exercise. If not detected and controlled with proper

treatment, heartworm can lead to congestive heart failure and death.

There are highly effective prescription preventive medications which prevents the larvae from developing into adult heartworms. Prescribed medications must be given once monthly on a year-round basis to be most effective.

Although there are available treatments (both medical and surgical) for heartworm disease – these treatments are not without risks. Prevention is the best medicine – preventing maturation of the microfilariae into adult worms.

## FELINE HEARTWORM

Although heartworm is seen less frequently in cats, the disease poses a much greater danger because the outcome is often fatal.

There currently are no drugs approved for fighting heartworm in cats. Cats can be treated with canine medications, but this can lead to dangerous side effects, including lung failure and death. Another approach to battling the disease is by treating



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the symptoms, with hopes of the cat outliving the worms (heartworms live within a cat for about two years). However, this approach can result in sudden death as the worms exit through the pulmonary arteries to the lungs.

Unfortunately, there are no consistent clinical signs of heartworm in cats. Common clues include coughing and rapid breathing. Other signs include weight loss and vomiting. However, all of these signs are also common in other diseases. Diagnosis is difficult for veterinarians and may include outside laboratory tests, radiographs, and ultrasound studies.

The good news is that there are heartworm prevention drugs available for cats. If a cat is frequently outside, SWVH recommends a monthly prescription heartworm preventative medication. These drugs are given once monthly and are very effective and safe in cats and kittens.

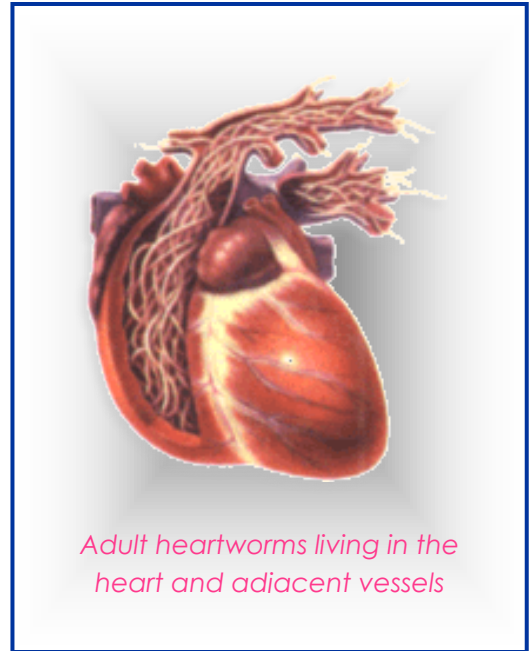
## NEW RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recent mosquito trappings by the Nevada Department of Agriculture have found six different species of mosquitoes known to be good carriers and transmitters of heartworm in Washoe County.

There are different theories as to why these species are now able to live in our area (*i.e.*, increased average temp, hitching a ride on vegetation from California, etc.), but all agree that these mosquitoes did not reside here until recently. While the risk for heartworm transmission is still much smaller in Northern Nevada than in other parts of the country (the South and Midwest) – SWVH now recommends year-round, once-monthly heartworm prevention. Before starting a heartworm prevention program on adult dogs, we take a small blood sample to make sure that your dog does not already have a heartworm infection. The oral prescription preventative (Heartgard Plus®) we recommend for dogs is highly palatable and dogs think they are getting a yummy treat once a month! We have Heartgard® for cats or a topical monthly prescription preventative (Revolution®) for kitties who are finicky eaters.

Microchips are the best way to permanently identify your dog or cat. On **Wednesdays** SWVH will offer \$10 off Microchip implantation and registration.

(\$40 instead of \$50)



Heartworm is a frightening and serious disease, but the key is prevention and education. The doctors and staff of SWVH would be happy to discuss your concerns and questions at any time!

*Sincerely,*

The Doctors and Staff of SWVH

SWVH is happy to announce that **Tuesdays** are now **Senior Appreciation Day**

10% Discount for services and products performed on Tuesday

\*\*Seniors are over 62 years old\*\*

### Helpful Websites:

[www.healthypet.com/library\\_view.aspx?id=53](http://www.healthypet.com/library_view.aspx?id=53)

[www.avma.org/animal\\_health/brochures/heartworm/heartworm\\_brochure.asp](http://www.avma.org/animal_health/brochures/heartworm/heartworm_brochure.asp)