

Fact Sheet

No Crystal Ball

Why pets need year-round heartworm protection

If only veterinarians had a crystal ball that could reveal exactly when and where heartworm was going to pose a threat to every pet in the country, they could counsel pet owners accordingly. However, crystal balls are in short supply, and weather and environmental conditions that are conducive to heartworm transmission are impossible to predict. For example, who would have predicted that the winter of 2012 would be—as the U.S. National Climatic Data Center has confirmed—the fourth warmest winter in more than a century? Meanwhile, in the past six years, the U.S. has experienced the most extreme negative and positive temperatures on record.



Across the country – from east to west and north to south – balmy winter weather is creating ideal conditions for an early crop of mosquitoes. And for pets, mosquitoes are more than a nuisance; these pesky little blood-sucking beasts are responsible for transmitting deadly heartworm disease.

Heartworm: impossible to predict

A nationwide incidence survey conducted by the American Heartworm Society in 2010 confirmed that heartworm incidence and its risk factors are impossible to predict. Multiple variables, from microclimates to the presence of wildlife carriers, cause rates of infection to vary dramatically, even within communities. Because these factors are so variable, we never know when mosquitoes will emerge in the spring or how late into fall they'll hang around.

Protect your pets

Heartworm is a serious disease that threatens the lives of infected dogs and cats. Fortunately, heartworm prevention is relatively inexpensive and easy to administer. And because neither you nor your veterinarian can predict when or where your pet might be exposed, the American Heartworm Society recommends that you Think 12: (1) get your pet tested every 12 months for heartworm and (2) give your pet heartworm preventive 12 months a year.

Think 12 and you won't need a crystal ball!

