

# Amherst Animal Hospital

*Modern Medicine. Traditional Values.*

## Feline Heartworm and Intestinal Parasite Prevention

- **What are heartworms?**

Heartworms are a common and potentially deadly internal parasite. Heartworm larvae are transmitted through mosquito bites, and since mosquitoes can easily get indoors, even cats that do not spend much time outdoors are at risk. Heartworms affect cats differently than dogs, but the disease they cause is equally serious. Heartworms cause chronic lung damage and can cause acute death in cats. The best way to protect your cat from getting this disease is monthly heartworm preventative medication.

- **What is a zoonotic disease?**

A zoonotic disease is any disease that can be transmitted directly or indirectly from animals to humans. Some parasites (such as hookworms and roundworms) can be passed directly to humans. Children are especially at risk for acquiring zoonotic parasites. Disposing of pet feces on a regular basis can help remove infective eggs before they can be picked up or ingested by pets or humans. You can reduce your family's risk of parasitic infection by practicing good personal hygiene, including thorough hand washing, especially before eating.

- **What intestinal parasites are risks for my cat?**

- Roundworms – Kittens can get roundworms from their mothers while nursing. Cats can also get roundworms by eating infected animals (such as rodents or birds) or from contaminated soil. Roundworms can be passed to children if they ingest roundworm eggs by putting contaminated fingers in their mouths.
- Hookworms – Kittens can get hookworms while in the uterus or while nursing. Cats can become infected with hookworms by swallowing hookworm eggs or larvae. Hookworms infect humans by penetrating the skin when walking barefoot on contaminated ground. This can cause skin lesions and itching.
- Tapeworms – Cats can become infected with tapeworms by ingesting fleas or rodents infected with tapeworms. Tapeworm species that can be harmful to humans are uncommon in the U.S.
- All of these parasites can cause vomiting and/or diarrhea and weight loss.
- Revolution and Heartgard prevent most of these intestinal parasites.

- **How can I prevent these parasites and diseases?**

The Amherst Animal Hospital recommends year round heartworm and parasite prevention. A single dose of preventative is applied topically or given orally once monthly. We recommend annual fecal examinations to identify intestinal parasites. Tests for feline heartworm disease are not 100% accurate and can give false negative results; therefore, we do not perform annual heartworm testing in cats. Even cats that live primarily indoors are at risk for these parasites and should be protected.

- **What about on-line pet pharmacies?**

We encourage you to purchase your cat's parasite preventatives from our hospital, but we respect your right to choose to obtain them elsewhere. Most of the prescription drugs sold through on-line pet pharmacies are not obtained directly from the manufacturers of these products. Some are routed through veterinarians that resell the products for profit and others are imported from other countries. The pharmaceutical manufacturers of monthly parasite preventatives will not guarantee the safety and effectiveness of products sold through on-line pet pharmacies.

Our hospital values strong relationships with our clients and patients and we are here to help you make the best choice for the health care of your pet. Feel free to ask our staff members if you have questions about heartworm or intestinal parasite prevention.

*Our internal parasite prevention program is provided as part of an ongoing effort to improve our services and support the bond between you and your pet.*