



Are there natural ways to prevent heartworms?

Q I'd like to find a natural way to protect my pets from heartworms. What are my options?

A This is a valid question and one veterinarians frequently hear. Certainly, drug-free strategies can help reduce the risk of heartworm transmission to a dog or cat. Because heartworms are spread by mosquitoes, keeping pets indoors overnight and avoiding walks at dusk or dawn when mosquitoes may be feeding can help prevent exposure to mosquitoes that could be carrying heartworms. Eliminating standing water close to your home that could serve as mosquito breeding grounds is also recommended. Finally, natural repellents such as Neem oil and CedarCide may help diminish the chances that pets will be bitten by infected mosquitoes; however, Neem oil products should be used with caution in cats.

Unfortunately, mosquito control is not enough. While the risk of heartworm exposure can be *reduced with these strategies, it can't be eliminated.*

To give pets the best chance of being protected, the American Heartworm Society recommends year-round use of U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved heartworm preventives.



Here's why:

- *It only takes one bite* from an infected mosquito to transmit heartworms to a dog or cat.
- Ensuring that your pet is never bitten by a mosquito is virtually impossible. Dogs need exercise—plus most go outside for bathroom breaks.
- Indoor cats aren't completely shielded either. In fact, a heartworm study showed that 1 in 4 cats infected were indoor cats. *Why?* Mosquitoes can sneak inside and often lurk in doorways and breezeways. Once indoors, mosquitoes see your pet as the source of a tasty blood meal.

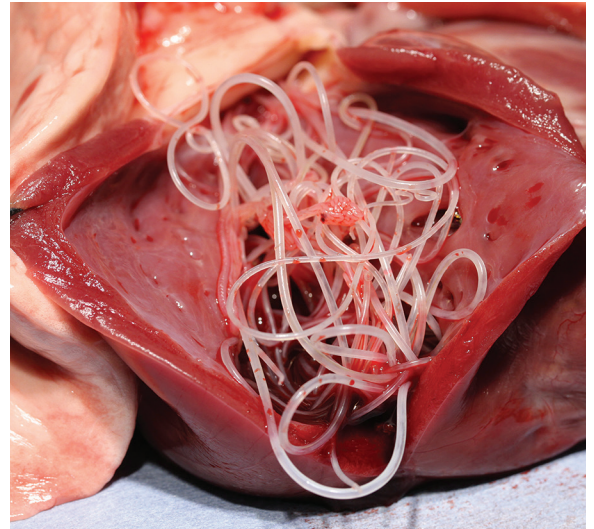
To give pets the best chance of being protected, the American Heartworm Society recommends year-round use of U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved heartworm preventives. While you may have seen websites that promote nosodes and herbal preventives, none of these products has been proven or FDA-approved to prevent heartworms in pets—nor do respected alternative-therapy veterinarians endorse their use.

Q I don't like the idea of giving my pet a drug month after month. Is it safe?

A This concern is understandable, but you can feel confident that keeping pets on approved heartworm preventives currently is the best—and safest—way to protect their health. The FDA requires extensive testing to confirm the effectiveness and safety of heartworm medications before approval, and monitors safety after the medications are on the market. It is also worth noting that the avermectin class of medications, to which heartworm preventives belong, are naturally occurring compounds that are generated as fermentation products of a soil-dwelling bacterium.

Some heartworm preventives protect only against heartworms, while others protect against everything from intestinal parasites to fleas and mites. Work with your veterinarian to determine what your pet needs—and doesn't need.

A final thought: the biggest threat to your pets' health is *not* protecting them from heartworm. Once infected, dogs must undergo a costly and potentially risky treatment regimen, and the damage left by the infection can be lifelong. Meanwhile, there is no approved heartworm treatment for cats. The best and safest alternative is year-round prevention.



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