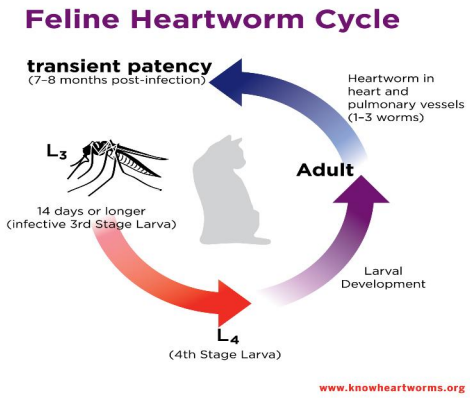
Sacramento Cat Hospital Newsletter

Your Cat's Health, Our Passion. **May 2009**

May is Heartworm Prevention Month Here At the Sacramento Cat Hospital

When most people hear "heartworm," they automatically associate it with heart parasites or heart disease. What they don't realize is that, in cats, a heartworm infection manifests as a respiratory disease.

A heartworm infection can result in asthma–like symptoms such as coughing, wheezing and labored breathing. Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease (HARD) is a growing problem here in the Sacramento area and can be spread from cat to cat by mosquitoes.



The infection occurs when a mosquito, carrying microscopic heartworm larvae, bites a cat and the larvae are transferred to the cat's tissue. The larvae develop there and then enter a blood vessel as juvenile worms. The juvenile worms are carried through the blood stream to the arteries in the lungs, where they cause an inflammatory response. Most of the juvenile worms die at this point, causing more inflammation and asthma-like symptoms in the cat. Any worms that do make it to the adult stage may live for several years undetected, but they will still cause inflammation when they die. The inflammation in some cases can be severe enough to cause death.

To protect your cat from heartworms and HARD, the doctors and staff of the Sacramento Cat Hospital recommend a monthly heartworm preventative, such as Heartgard. Even one mosquito that gets into your house could be carrying heartworms, so even indoor only cats should be protected.

Chris's Corner

If your cat is like me, then they're not huge fans of getting their vaccines every year. I'm here to tell you why they need them anyway and which ones the Sacramento Cat Hospital thinks they need every year.

For indoor only cats my doctors and technicians recommend an FVRCP (distemper) vaccine and a rabies vaccine.

The FVRCP vaccine protects against bacteria and viruses that can give me a URI (upper respiratory infection) or "kitty cold." Even though your cat may not go outside, the germs can be carried in on clothing or if another kitty comes to visit.

The rabies vaccine is more a public health issue