

Survey: Cat, Dog Heartworm Cases on the Rise

American Heartworm Society works with vets to raise awareness among pet owners.

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Cases of heartworm disease are on the rise across the United States, according to a new survey by the American Heartworm Society.

When compared to historical data, the survey, which is conducted on a tri-annual basis, demonstrates that the number of heartworm cases is gradually rising.

Heartworm disease, potentially fatal to dogs and cats, has been reported in all 50 states. However, the Delta, South-central, and Southeast regions of the United States have the greatest incidence, with prevalence highest in the Delta region. In many counties and parishes in this region, the survey found that there were 100 or more cases reported per clinic.

The survey results are consistent with the geographical spread of heartworm disease, particularly in the northwest United States, according to AHS. This is especially apparent in Oregon and Montana where large areas of the state that previously reported less than one dog diagnosed per clinic increased to between one and five or more dogs per clinic in 2007.

AHS is working closely with the veterinarian community to raise awareness among consumers and provide guidance on prevention and treatment.

For example, AHS has an educational outreach program called Heartworm University. AHS is also developing canine and feline heartworm guidelines, providing incidence maps to veterinarians, offering client education materials, and providing the latest information and opinions on heartworm disease.

In addition, AHS will present its latest findings at the Heartworm Symposium April 15 through 18, 2010, in Memphis, Tenn.

Major survey sponsors included Bayer Animal Health of Shawnee, Kan., Fort Dodge Animal Health of Overland Park, Kan., Idexx Laboratories of Westbrook, Maine, Intervet/Schering-Plough Animal Health of Kenilworth, N.J., Lilly of Indianapolis, Merck of Duluth, Ga., Novartis Animal Health of Greensboro, N.C., and Pfizer of New York. Virbac Animal Health of Fort Worth, Texas, was a minor sponsor. Banfield, The Pet Hospital of Portland, Ore., and Idexx provided additional data support.