

Mosquitoes pose heartworm risk for pets

Summer activities such as hiking and camping can put your pet at risk for contracting heartworm disease, a serious, life-threatening condition that can affect both dogs and cats.

Caused by the adult stage of the parasite *Dirofilaria immitis*, the infection may cause inflammation and thickening of the pulmonary arteries, and damage to the heart, liver and kidneys. If untreated, it can lead to heart disease and death.

"Heartworm disease is present in Oregon, even in the metropolitan areas," according to Dr. Gary Wood, a member of the Oregon Veterinary Medical Association and a veterinary cardiologist.

Transmission: Mosquitoes are the carriers of heartworm disease. The life cycle of a heartworm begins when a mosquito bites an infected animal carrying microfilariae in its blood. If the mosquito bites another cat or dog, it transmits the larvae to that animal. About six to eight months after the initial mosquito bite, the larvae arrive at the heart.

Diagnosis: Your veterinarian may test a blood sample for the antigens (proteins) produced by adult heartworms. The sample may also be examined under a microscope for the presence of the heartworm larvae. More laboratory tests, including X-rays, may be required to make a diagnosis. Signs of infection in dogs include a chronic cough (which is the most common symptom and a sign of advanced illness), lack of energy or endurance, difficulty breathing, loss of appetite or weight loss. Signs of infection in cats include: cough, difficulty breathing, vomiting, sluggishness or weight loss.

Treatment for Dogs: If detected early enough, most dogs can be treated successfully. The goal is to kill both the adult heartworms and the larvae. The approved treatment is an arsenical compound administered through a series of injections.

This requires hospitalization and close supervision by a veterinarian. When treatment for the adult heartworms is complete, another drug is administered to kill the heartworm larvae remaining in the bloodstream. Only when tests show a dog to be free from heartworms is a preventative medication prescribed.

Treatment for Cats: Currently, there is no approved product for the treatment of heartworm disease in cats. However, a spontaneous cure is not uncommon, so treatment is aimed at helping cats tolerate the disease, rather than eliminating it. It is important to note that, in Oregon, heartworm disease is a far greater risk to dogs than to cats.

Prevention: When it comes to detecting heartworm disease, observing your pet's health is not enough. Clinical symptoms develop very slowly; in fact, there may be no visible

warning signs that a dog or cat is sick until the disease has reached an advanced stage. Prevention is simple compared to the expense and risk of treatment.

Several medicines are available to prevent heartworm disease, including once-a-month pills or flavored treats and topicals, some of which can also protect your pet against fleas and other types of worms. There is no vaccine for heartworm disease. Talk with your veterinarian about testing and the appropriate preventive treatment to help keep your pet safe from heartworm disease.

Information provided by the Oregon Veterinary Medical Association, a nonprofit organization of veterinarians.



Above, one of the competitors shooting a balloon from horseback at the CMSA NW Regional Mounted Shooters competition held at Anderson Park on July 15 and 16.

Bits & Bites

By Jacqueline Ramsay



Hello Summer – oh, yes it is. Have you been walking at the lake since the 4th of July? Notice any sunning snakes? When the fellow mowed the tall grass he must have disturbed their Home Sweet Home. Personally, I enjoy seeing them sunning themselves but they sure have shook up a few walkers who weren't aware that snakes inhabit the lake, too.

About the 4th fireworks, they were WOW. Most interesting was the car alarm that went off

every time there was a Big Boom and there were plenty of them. I hope the party had enough battery left to start the car. Oh, yes, best parade entry other than the kids were the "Jazzy Gals."

And, please don't tell me there isn't anyone else in town that does not think the school bands should march and play in the 4th of July Parade. No excuse that school is out for the summer. When we were kids it was a 'given,' you marched on the 4th to show respect.

Have you noticed you can't get to Hillsboro as fast as you used to? Leave early, come home late – road delays. That's how I know it's summer.

All for now, I'm off to a rest at Tuality for a couple of days. I'll miss you.



**Mike James
Horseshoeing**

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**We also want to thank those who attended the spaghetti dinner, gave at the fireworks or in a can at a store.
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