

Lungworm in dogs: Information

The lungworm *Angiostrongylus vasorum* is a parasite of dogs and foxes that can be fatal. It is transmitted by slugs and snails, which harbour the immature lungworms. Recently the University of Glasgow tested slugs and snails from three public parks in Glasgow and North Ayrshire and found that up to 11% of them were carrying the parasite. Cases of lungworm in dogs have been diagnosed by vets throughout Ayrshire.

Dogs can become infected when they eat infected slugs or snails, or even lick the slime trails. After the dog swallows immature lungworms they migrate through the dog's body until they arrive in the pulmonary arteries, which supply the lungs. Here they complete their growth, causing inflammation in the arteries, but the worst damage occurs once they begin to lay eggs. Tiny immature worms hatch and start to burrow through the lung tissue, eventually being coughed up and swallowed, to pass through the digestive tract and out in the dog's faeces. Slugs and snails pick up these immature worms and spread them to other dogs or foxes.

The clinical signs of lungworm can vary, and may not become obvious until several weeks or months after a dog first becomes infected. Breathlessness and coughing occur because of lung damage. Lungworm also causes bleeding tendencies. Neurological signs (similar to a stroke), bleeding or bruising in the eyes or skin, or internal bleeding leading to shock have all been reported in infected dogs.

Infection with lungworm can often prove fatal, but with prompt attention and veterinary treatment many dogs do survive. However, there may still be long term effects, such as chronic damage in the lungs and pulmonary arteries, which require ongoing medication for the rest of the dog's life.

When it comes to lungworm, prevention is most definitely better than cure. Please read our information sheet "Lungworm in dogs – choosing a wormer".

Jenny Helm of Glasgow University Small Animal Hospital talks about the recent lungworm study, with lungworm survivor Noushka and her owner, at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=BF0b-SkGi6c "Lungworm in Scotland"

Find out more about lungworm at:
www.lungworm.co.uk

Lungworm in dogs: Choosing a wormer

When choosing a wormer for your dog it's important to remember to:

 **Use a worming product that acts against lungworm**

Be aware that not all worming treatments contain an active ingredient which prevents lungworm. You should choose a product that contains moxidectin or milbemycin oxime. These products are currently only available from a vet, or with a veterinary prescription.

 **Dose your dog monthly**

Another study has shown that preventative treatment for lungworm needs to be given monthly. If doses are given less often there is enough time between treatments for dogs to become infected and develop lung damage.

 **Give the correct amount**

It's also very important that the correct dose is given: you are very welcome to bring your dog to one of our surgeries for a free weight check so you can be sure of this.

Remember, if you have concerns about lungworm, or any other questions about parasite control for your dog, we're always happy to arrange a free nurse consultation. Alternatively you can call or email your query to us. We're here to help.

Find out more about lungworm at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=BF0b-SkGi6c

www.lungworm.co.uk

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