

Lungworm in Dogs

What is Lungworm?

Lungworm, *Angiostrongylus vasorum*, is a parasitic worm that lives in the blood vessels supplying the lungs and in the heart of affected dogs. In the UK most cases of Lungworm infestation in dogs occur in the Southwest of England and Southern Wales but the parasite has been spreading southwards and cases have been reported in the Home Counties and the Midlands. To date, very few cases have been reported in Oxfordshire and our practice has yet to see a case. Lungworm in dogs has received recent attention in the national press and on TV due to the increasing number of cases being diagnosed throughout the UK.



How can a dog get Lungworm?

Dogs can be infected by eating the lungworm larvae. These are microscopic and are present in the faeces of infected dogs and also carried by infected slugs and snails. Not all slugs and snails are infected with lungworm. A dog can be infected by eating the infected slugs or snails, the faeces of infected dogs or things in the environment contaminated with these such as grass.



What are the symptoms of Lungworm?

The symptoms of Lungworm infection vary between dogs with some dogs not showing any symptoms but others having very severe and even fatal illness. Younger dogs tend to be most commonly affected with the highest number of cases being seen in dogs under two years old. Some of the reported symptoms include; coughing, breathlessness, tiring easily on exercise, excessive bleeding or blood-clotting problems, changes in behaviour and seizures (fits). Not all infected dogs will display all of the above signs, and these symptoms are not specific for lungworm infection as they do occur in other infections and diseases. If your dog is displaying any of the above symptoms you should consult a veterinary surgeon.

Can Lungworm be prevented?

There is no 100% effective ways to prevent a dog being infected with lungworm. Advocate spot-on is a licensed product for prevention and treatment of lungworm. Studies have also shown a reduction in the number of infective larvae with monthly worming with Milbemax tablets. We recommend routine worming every 3 months in dogs over 6 months for the prevention of other worms, alongside environmental control such as cleaning up your dogs faeces especially in public places. Monthly worming should be considered in dogs that are visiting areas such as the South West where lungworm is more prevalent, in young dogs and in dogs that are known to eat slugs and snails.

If you are concerned that your dog may be at risk from lungworm infection or you want to discuss your dogs worming treatment please make an appointment with one of our veterinary surgeons.



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