

Feline Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease HARD



**Pandora was diagnosed with
HARD in February**

When a cat presented with coughing and a voice change, Dr. Caroline Simard says she never considered heartworms might be the cause. She thought it might be asthma and decided to do some blood work. "Totally by mistake I included the heartworm antigen test, and it came back positive," she said. The cat, it turned out, had Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease, or HARD.

Dr. Simard practiced in Montreal, Canada, for 12 years before moving to Point Breeze Veterinary Clinic in Pittsburgh, Pa., three years ago. "In Canada, because it is colder; veterinarians mostly recommend giving preventives during the summer. Any news of prevention and products takes a few years to get up here, and I just hadn't been exposed to it," she said. Dr. Simard had only ever seen three cases of heartworms, and all were canine in Pittsburgh.

Pandora, a 10-year-old cat, started breathing heavily, gagging and coughing around December of last year. Pandora had never had any health problems before, so her owner; Carrie Rudolph, began to worry when Pandora's condition didn't improve. She made an appointment with her veterinarian in February, and before her visit did some research on the Internet. She read online that heartworms could be the cause of Pandora's disease, but knew heartworms were rare in felines, so she didn't bring it up in her visit.

When her veterinarian, Dr. Simard alerted Rudolph to Pandora's diagnosis, she wasn't shocked. "I had researched feline heartworm disease and thought it might be one of the possibilities, but I've since done more research and was surprised to learn that I don't live in an area with high incidence," Rudolph said.

Dr. Simard added, "I had heard about HARD, but this case absolutely changed my thinking. I've since put my own cats on prevention, and I've been telling this story to all my feline clients, recommending prevention."

Pandora is now receiving a steroid treatment and is no longer showing signs of respiratory distress. Dr. Simard tested Rudolph's other two cats for heartworms. Both of the tests came back negative, and the cats are now on prevention.

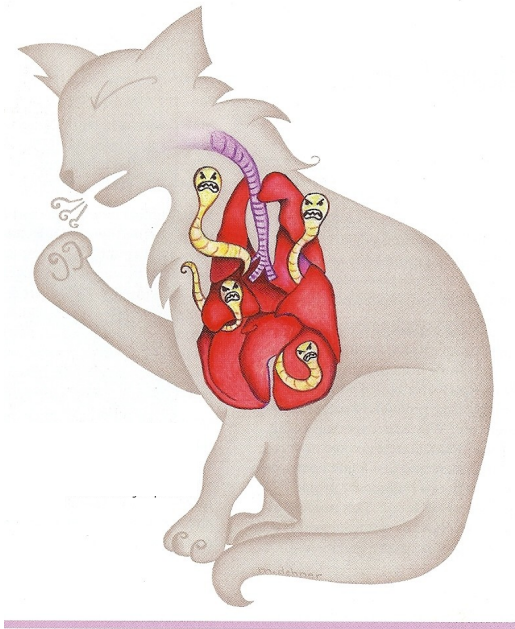
[Click here](#) for more information on Feline HARD.

Feline Heartworm Disease

5 Myths and Misunderstandings

Signs Associated with HARD: Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease

anorexia	fainting
blindness	lethargy
collapse	rapid heart rate
convulsions	sudden death
coughing	vomiting
diarrhea	weight loss
difficulty breathing	



1 Dogs vs. Cats
Heartworm disease is not just a canine disease. Heartworms affect cats differently than dogs, but the disease they cause is equally serious.

2 Indoor vs. Outdoor Cats
It only takes one mosquito to infect a cat, and because mosquitoes can get indoors, both indoor and outdoor cats are at risk and should receive heartworm preventive medication. In a North Carolina study, 28% of the cats diagnosed with heartworm were inside-only cats.

3 It's a Heart Disease
The name "heartworm disease" is a misnomer, as it mostly affects the lungs and not just the heart. Signs are often mistaken for feline asthma, allergic bronchitis or other respiratory diseases.

4 Adult Heartworms vs. Larvae
Cats do not need an adult heartworm to exhibit clinical signs; in fact, larvae are a main cause of the problems. Studies show 50% of cats infected with heartworm larvae have significant disease of the small arteries supplying blood to the lungs.

5 Diagnosis
Diagnosis is difficult as negative antigen and antibody tests do not rule out heartworm disease. Positive tests, however, are significant.