

Snails should be off the menu!

There have been recent reports in the region of dogs catching lungworms from eating slugs or snails which have been especially prevalent this year with all the rain we have had. These parasites can cause severe ill health and even death so it is worth considering using a monthly preparation to protect your dog.

The lungworm *Angiostrongylus vasorum* (also known as French Heartworm) is a parasite that infects dogs. The adult of this particular lungworm lives in the heart and major blood vessels supplying the lungs, where it can cause a host of problems. Left untreated, the infection can often be fatal.

The lungworm parasite is carried by slugs and snails. The problem arises when dogs purposefully or accidentally eat these common garden pests when rummaging through undergrowth, eating grass, drinking from puddles or outdoor water bowls, or pick them up from their toys. Foxes can also become infected with the lungworm, and have been implicated in the spread of the parasite across the country.

There are two main problems caused by dogs becoming infected with lungworm:

1. Infection with lungworm can cause serious health problems in dogs, and is often fatal if not diagnosed and treated.
2. Dogs infected with lungworm spread the parasite into the environment, as the larvae of the parasite are expelled in the dog's faeces. This increases the chances of other dogs becoming infected.

Dogs of all ages and breeds can become infected with lungworm. However, younger dogs seem to be more prone to picking up the parasite. Dogs known to eat slugs and snails should also be considered high risk.

Lungworm infections can result in a number of different signs which may easily be confused with other illnesses. If your dog is displaying any of the signs below, consult your veterinary surgeon immediately.

Breathing problems; coughing, tiring easily.

Poor blood clotting; nose bleeds, pale gums, bleeding into the whites of eyes.

Generally unwell; weight loss, poor appetite, vomiting, diarrhoea.

Changes in behaviour; depression, tiring easily, seizures.

There are some dogs which don't initially show outward signs of lungworm infection. If you are concerned your veterinary surgeon can perform tests which may help detect if your dog is infected with the lungworm parasite.

It is important to recognise that lungworm is not prevented or treated by the conventional use of worming tablets when given every three months, or even every month.

Thankfully, treatment of lungworm infection in dogs is widely available and easy to administer. Once diagnosed and treated, most dogs make a full recovery. The key to successful treatment is taking action early. If you are concerned your dog has picked up, or is at risk from, picking up a lungworm infection, speak to your veterinary surgeon without delay.

Prevention and Treatment of *Angiostrongylus vasorum*

Your vet can prescribe a specific spot-on solution to treat this parasite, which is applied to the back of the neck. Applied monthly this product can also prevent the establishment of infection with *Angiostrongylus vasorum*. Speak to your veterinary surgeon for further advice.

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