Heartworm Infection in Michigan Cats
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Researchers at the University of Michigan College of Veterinary Medicine* collected the heartworm test results of 1,348 cats tested at private veterinary practices in Michigan. They found that through the use of the very specific heartworm antigen test, 1.9% (25 of 1,348) of the cats were infected. Most of the infected cats were from the southeastern portion of the state, the same geographical area in the state in which heartworm disease in dogs is most prevalent.

The blood from each cat was tested using an antigen test and two different types of antibody tests. There were significant differences between the results obtained through the different tests. The antibody tests were negative for 20 of the 25 cats who tested positive on the antigen test. On the other hand, the samples tested with one of the antibody test kits found 134 cats were positive.


Comments from our Veterinary Staff:

Clearly, there is a great difference between the accuracy of the types of heartworm tests on samples from cats. This study underscores the need to use the heartworm antigen test on cats. The antibody test, however, can be used in dogs, since it is much more accurate in that species.

The study also suggests that the prevalence of heartworm infection in dogs within a certain geographical area may be a good indicator of the risk of cats in that same area developing heartworm infections.