

# PETS & PEOPLE

## Getting To The Heart Of Parasites And Pets

(NAPS)—Sometimes our pets can give us more than affection and attention. Recent studies confirm that heartworm disease and intestinal parasites in pets—some that may transmit disease to humans—continues to be a serious issue nationwide.

Some intestinal parasites such as roundworms can be transmitted from unprotected dogs and cats to humans with often devastating effect. According to the CDC, more than 10,000 Americans—mostly young children—are diagnosed annually with roundworm infection, a completely preventable disease. For example, one roundworm infection known as ocular larva migrans (OLM) causes partial permanent loss of vision or blindness in over 700 Americans each year.

“In 2006, we conducted a study in 11 Western U.S. states, where climate and other conditions are not generally thought to encourage parasites,” said Dr. David Stansfield, head of Professional Relations for Novartis Animal Health US, Inc. “We were surprised at the prevalence of heartworm and intestinal parasites.”

Another study was a survey of more than 600 animal rescue organizations receiving dogs rescued from hurricane-devastated areas in the Gulf region.

A spokesperson for one rescue organization said, “With the number of dogs and the heat and humidity, conditions down there were ideal for parasites. So many people helped to restore the health of the pets we rescued, including a veterinarian who treated all of them for free. All the dogs were on a monthly oral parasite preventive before being reunited with their owners or being adopted. I believe our efforts were successful.”

However, several leading para-



**Protecting your pets against heartworm disease and intestinal parasites—and even preventing fleas on your pet and in your home—can be easier than many think.**

sitologists believe that increased mobility—unprotected pets traveling with their families—and a growing, disease-prevalent coyote population, are more likely sources of heartworm and intestinal parasite transmission.

Stansfield added that the latest data from the American Animal Hospital Association shows that most pet owners are only giving their dogs heartworm preventives for five months out of the year—a serious implication for their health. Cats, too, are at risk and may even be less protected than dogs.

Fortunately, protecting your pets against heartworm disease and other parasites, including whipworms, can be easier than many think. Ask your veterinarian about effective and convenient oral products that you can give your dog every month, year-round, to prevent diseases in pets and people.

For more information on protecting your pets and your family's health through preventing parasites, visit the rebate center at [www.petwellness.com](http://www.petwellness.com).

### Did You Know?

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