

LUNGWORM INFECTION IN DOGS



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Lungworm (*Angiostrongylus vasorum*) infection in dogs is now considered endemic in the South East of England and we have seen increasing numbers of both subclinical and clinical infections – some of which have been life threatening. Dogs infected with lungworm can be silent carriers for several years before clinical signs develop. Clinically affected dogs can exhibit respiratory disease (such as bronchitis and pneumonia) and/or bleeding problems.

Lungworm is primarily transmitted by the ingestion of slugs, snails, and frogs but it can also occur through ingestion of items contaminated by slug, snail, and frog slime trails. This means that dogs who scavenge, eat grass, play with toys outside, and have outdoor food/water stations can also be at increased risk.

We recommend using a monthly product to prevent infection.

There are currently three licenced products for the prevention of lungworm – **monthly Milbemax** chewable tablets, **monthly NexGuard Spectra** chewable tablets or **monthly Advocate** spot-on treatment.

- If your dog is clinically well and you would like to test for lungworm before starting prevention, then either we can collect a blood sample for in-house testing OR you can submit a ‘pooled’ faecal sample (collecting over 3 days) to us for laboratory testing.
- If your dog is ill or you think your dog may be infected with lungworm, then please speak to a vet. We will likely recommend starting investigations with a chest radiograph (‘x-ray’) to check for signs of infection and a blood test to check for lungworm and bleeding problems.

TREATMENT OF CONFIRMED CASES

There are two options we recommend for treatment of lungworm – a **single application of Advocate spot-on** or a **short course of Panacur oral granules** – and this choice will be made upon discussion with your vet. Successful treatment is then confirmed by submitting a ‘pooled’ faecal sample to us for laboratory testing. Treatment should always be followed up with monthly use of a preventative to reduce the chance of recurrence.

Very rarely, treatment of a confirmed case of lungworm can cause a severe allergic reaction to the dying worms and larvae, which means that some cases need to be treated cautiously in the hospital under close supervision of our staff.

If your dog has previously tested positive on the blood test future monitoring can be done by submitting a faecal sample to us for testing. This is best done on a ‘pooled’ sample over three days to minimise the small risk of a false negative result.