

Lungworm - is your dog at risk?

In recent years a new parasite has become more prevalent. *Angiostrongylus vasorum*, or lungworm a parasite that was more commonly found in the South West and Wales has been diagnosed in dogs in our area.

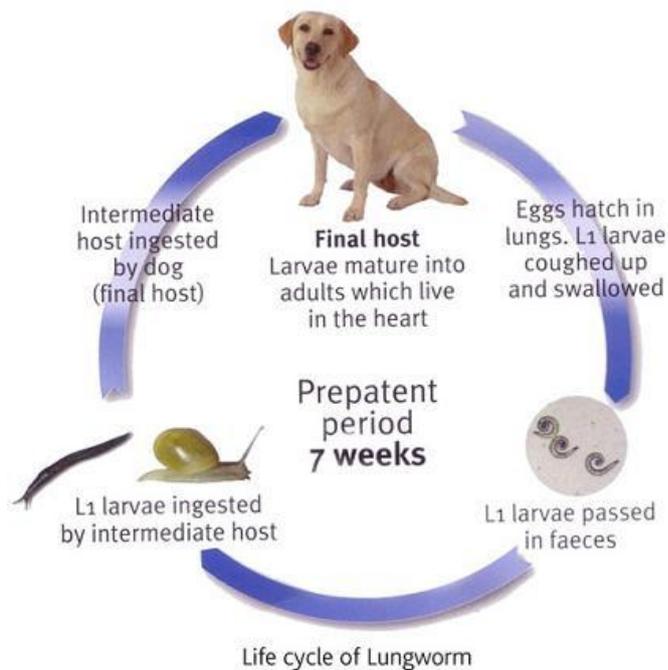
How are dogs infected?

Lungworm infects dogs when they eat infected slugs, snails or frogs. Some dogs like to eat slugs or snails, but most are incidentally infected while eating grass or chewing on toys under which a slug or snail is sheltering in the garden.

When a dog is infected the adult worms live and reproduce in the heart and blood vessels of the lung. The adult worms produce larvae which pass through the dog's digestive tract and out in its faeces. Slugs and snails are infected by ingesting (eating) the larvae which have contaminated the environment.

What are the clinical signs of lungworm?

- Coughing
- Breathlessness
- Bleeding disorders
- Seizures



How is lungworm diagnosed?

Definitive diagnosis is made by identification of lungworm larvae in a dog's faeces or sometimes by looking at washes taken from a dog's lungs by the vet (a technique known as

broncho-alveolar lavage). There is now also an in house blood test, which takes 15 minutes to run, and can be used to diagnose or rule out lungworm infection in dogs. Occasionally we may treat a dog for lungworm when we suspect it could be causing a problem but we are unable to identify the larvae.

Prevention

To prevent Lungworm infection we recommend using a product called *Advocate* which, when used monthly, prevents lungworm in dogs. This product also treats fleas and round worms, so it could be used as a routine wormer/flea prevention in dogs that are considered at risk from getting lungworm. (Please note this product does not kill tapeworms and so additional tapeworm treatment may be required). Alternatively, treating your dog with *Milbemax* wormer every month also prevents Lungworm infection.

Apart from regular medication, other tips for reducing risk of your dog becoming infected include cleaning toys, which have been left out and keeping them inside, and not leaving food or water bowls outside. Please note that you are unlikely to significantly reduce the slug and snail population in your garden by using excessive quantities of slug bait. Slug pellets, which contain metaldehyde, are toxic to dogs and should be used with extreme care – if at all – when pets or children are around.