

Lungworm myth busting

Lungworm is dangerous to your cat. It is a parasite that can live in the airways and small blood vessels of your cat's lungs. Here are some common myths about lungworm and the true story behind them. When it comes to your cat's health, it's important to be armed with the facts.



myth

Lungworm isn't all that common

fact

The prevalence of lungworm in cats across Australia is higher than originally thought: 16% of cats tested in Sydney¹ and Melbourne,² and 40% of cats tested in Tasmania.³

myth

I can tell if my cat has lungworm by keeping an eye out for the symptoms

fact

Actually, not all lungworm-infected cats will show signs of infection. If you do suspect lungworm, take your cat to the vet. Lungworm can be difficult to diagnose and can only be confirmed by your vet.



myth

My cat can catch lungworm from another sick cat coughing on them

fact

Your cat cannot catch lungworm directly from another cat. The lungworm parasite only becomes infective inside the slug or snail, so it cannot be transmitted directly from one infected cat to another. Cats become infected with lungworm when they eat snails or slugs, or alternatively mice, rats, frogs, lizards or birds, which have eaten the slugs or snails.



myth

My cat is an indoor-only cat, and is therefore safe from lungworm

fact

Outdoor cats with access to snails or slugs, or cats who hunt mice and rats, birds, lizards and frogs are more likely to become infected. However, any cat can become infected with lungworm, even indoor-only cats, as carriers of the parasite (such as mice) can get inside the home.

myth

The worst that can happen with lungworm is that my cat catches a cough

fact

If left untreated, lungworm can be deadly to cats. Lungworm also causes potentially permanent damage to the lungs. Symptoms are typically most severe between 6 and 13 weeks after infection when the adult female worms in the lungs produce large numbers of eggs. Common symptoms include:

- Persistent cough, often with bouts of intense coughing
- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing, sneezing
- Nasal discharge
- Open-mouthed abdominal breathing
- Lethargy
- Depression
- Weight loss



myth

I can easily protect my cat from lungworm disease

fact

This is true! While you cannot control whether or not your cat encounters lungworm, you can treat and control lungworm disease. Here are some tips:

- Prevent hunting behaviour in your cat by providing behavioural stimulation, a complete and balanced diet, fitting bells on their collar, and keeping them inside when possible (especially between dusk and dawn).
- Regularly clean up cat faeces in the environment to reduce infection of snails, slugs, mice, rats, frogs, lizards and birds.
- Use a product like Advocate, regularly and as directed. Advocate treats lungworm disease and monthly use controls reinfection.



References: 1. Martin C. The prevalence and molecular species identity of lungworms in Sydney cats. Sydney University, 2016. 2. Lacorcchia L *et al.* *JAVMA* 2009;235(1):43-49. 3. Gregory GG *et al.* *AVJ* 1976;52:317-320. ©Bayer Australia Ltd 2019. The Advantage Family™ is a trade mark and Advocate® is a registered trade mark of the Bayer Group. The Advantage Pet Care Line – 1800 678 368 from anywhere in Australia 9.00am to 6.00pm EST. Monday to Friday. SSW BHC0255. 11/18.