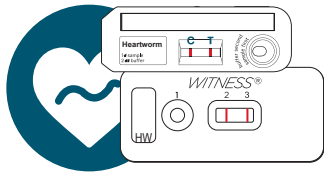


Positive Feline Heartworm Test What Happens Next?

Richard Goldstein, DVM, DACVIM, DECVIM-CA



Prior to placing on HW preventatives*† or suspected infection to establish HW infection status

TEST & EVALUATE

Perform in-clinic (VETSCAN Heartworm/WITNESS FFH/WITNESS Heartworm) or reference lab antigen HW test and an antibody test

**ANTIGEN POSITIVE
ANTIBODY POSITIVE,
NEGATIVE, OR
NOT PERFORMED**

**ANTIGEN NEGATIVE
ANTIBODY POSITIVE**

**ANTIGEN NEGATIVE ANTIBODY
NEGATIVE**

PREVENT & MONITOR

**ADULT HEARTWORM INFECTION
HIGHLY LIKELY**
Start preventative‡
Perform 3-view thoracic radiographs, ± echo
Symptomatic treatment as needed
(adulticide treatment not recommended)
Cat owner education on clinical signs

PREVENT & EVALUATE

**CAT EXPOSED: CURRENT OR RISK OF
HARD +/- ADULT HEARTWORM INFECTION
+/- PREVIOUS INFECTION**
Start preventative‡
Repeat antigen test immediately +/- in 1-2 months
Consider using a different test brand or reference
lab testing (DiroCHEK +/- heat treatment)
Consider baseline thoracic radiography,
echocardiography, esp. if respiratory signs

PREVENT

**HEARTWORM INFECTION
LESS LIKELY**
Start preventative‡
If no history of preventative, repeat
antibody and antigen test in 1-2 months
Consider imaging studies if clinical signs
of lower respiratory disease

**Echocardiography
± repeat antigen test
POSITIVE**

**Thoracic radiographs:
Pulmonary vascular/interstitial
pattern**

**Echocardiography
and repeat antigen
test NEGATIVE**

PREVENT & MONITOR

**ADULT HEARTWORM
INFECTION PRESENT**
Supportive/symptomatic treatment as needed
Cat owner education on clinical signs

PREVENT & MONITOR

**PRESUMPTIVE DIAGNOSIS OF
HARD, MATURE HEARTWORM
INFECTION POSSIBLE**
Supportive/symptomatic
treatment as needed

PREVENT & MONITOR

**CAT EXPOSED, ADULT HEARTWORM
INFECTION UNLIKELY**
Supportive/symptomatic
treatment as needed

Note: In the cat, no single test will detect all heartworm cases. The clinician must use a combination of test results to determine the likelihood of heartworm disease as the etiology of the cat's symptoms.‡

HW = Heartworm
HARD = Heartworm-associated respiratory disease
*CAPC recommendation
†Certain products have a caution for use in HW+ cats

‡ American Heartworm Society. Current Feline Guidelines for the Prevention, Diagnosis and Management of Heartworm (Dirofilaria immitis) Infection in Cats (2020). <https://www.heartwormsociety.org/veterinary-resources/american-heartworm-society-guidelines>

