



*Pima County Health Department*  
**Pima Animal Care Center**  
4000 N. Silverbell Rd. Tucson, AZ 85745  
(520) 243-5900 Fax (520) 243-5960  
www.pimaanimalcare.org

## ***NEWS RELEASE***

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**For Immediate Release**

**PACC Contact:  
Jayne Cundy – 243 5920**

### **THE PIMA ANIMAL CARE CENTER WARNS Mosquitoes Can Carry Heartworm Disease**

Tucson, Arizona - Monsoon rains bring a welcome relief to the long hot summer days here in Tucson, but the Pima Animal Care Center warns that when mosquitoes begin to breed they cause problems for both people and our pets. While mosquitoes are more commonly associated with West Nile virus in humans, they can directly contribute to heartworms in our pets.

Heartworms can be found in dogs, cats, ferrets and occasionally in people. They also occur in wild animals such as foxes, wolves, raccoons and coyotes. Although heartworms occur predominantly in the southeastern United States, in recent years the disease has been found throughout the United States.

Heartworms spend their adult life in the right side of the host animal's heart and in the large blood vessels connecting the heart to the lungs. Adult heartworms lay very tiny larvae which migrate into the bloodstream. When a mosquito draws blood from an infected animal, the larvae enter the mosquito where in a couple of weeks they grow larger and move to the mouth of the mosquito.

When the mosquito bites another animal, the larvae enter the animal's skin. It takes about 3 months for the larvae to migrate to the new host's heart and grow into adults. The whole cycle can take 6-7 months in dogs, a little longer in cats. The worms, which can grow to about 14 inches in length, often impair circulation causing damage to the heart, lungs, liver and kidneys. Without treatment, the disease can lead to congestive heart failure and the animal's death.

Keep dogs inside from dusk to dawn when mosquitoes are most active. Avoid areas of standing water and remember to recheck these areas after any rainfall. Check items which may hold water such as old tires, children's toys and trash cans. Encourage neighbors to do likewise as mosquitoes don't recognize property lines.

Heartworm preventatives, along with steps to avoid exposure to mosquitoes, work well to ensure animals stay safe from this disease. There are several products available for heartworm prevention as well as those containing mosquito repellants. It is not advisable to use DEET-based products on pets. Talk with your veterinarian to see what is appropriate for your pet. Any dog adopted or rescued from the Pima Animal Care Center shelter can be tested for heartworm, Lyme, and Tick Fever (*E. canis*) via a simple test called 3DX for a fee of \$27.

Pima Animal Care Center  
"People and Pets in a Caring Community"