

## French Heartworm (Canine Angiostrongylosis Vasorum)

### Another warning passed to the group from

Jane Binns

There is a parasite around that has been fairly prevalent in France (hence the name) but is now starting to be seen occasionally in England, particularly in the south.

Our veterinary practice had never come across it before and it has been relatively unknown this far north until now. It has now been reported as far north as Durham.

It is a parasite (worm) which is passed to dogs through the ingestion of infected snails and slugs, which act as hosts to the worm larvae. (The ingestion of these slugs and snails can be from dogs eating grass or foraging). The larvae then migrate from the dog's intestine to the heart and lungs, where they develop into adult worms. Symptoms are varied, but can include coughing, depression, weight loss, fits, diarrhea, vomiting and persistent bleeding from insignificant cuts.

I think this should be brought to everyone's attention, as French Heartworm can be fatal and may not be diagnosed early by Vets who have had no previous experience of it. French Heartworm invariably affects dogs of under two years of age and this is what happened to our ten-month old Golden Retriever, Geordie.

Geordie started with a cough and we took him to the Vets after a couple of days, thinking he may have swallowed something he should not have had. However, it was thought that he had kennel cough and was treated with antibiotics. After four days, he was still coughing, so we took him back and he was anaesthetized for them to have a look down into the chest and they did a tracheal wash, the results of which showed up the French Heartworm. He was immediately put on a two-week course of special wormers and he was really ill for the first few days (during which we really feared that we might lose him). We had some ups and downs, but he eventually came round to be his normal bouncy self.

It is now ten weeks since this all started and we still do not know what lasting damage has been done, despite what we hope was a fairly early diagnosis. We have just had a few blips on his recovery and he was taken in earlier this week for more x rays after going rapidly downhill again. The Vets cannot tell us anything definitive about how the French Heartworm may have affected him, but we get the feeling that any exertion brings him down fairly rapidly again.

Just be aware that this is about - and keep worming your dogs regularly!

Jane Binns