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Spirocerca Lupi

The silent killer of dogs



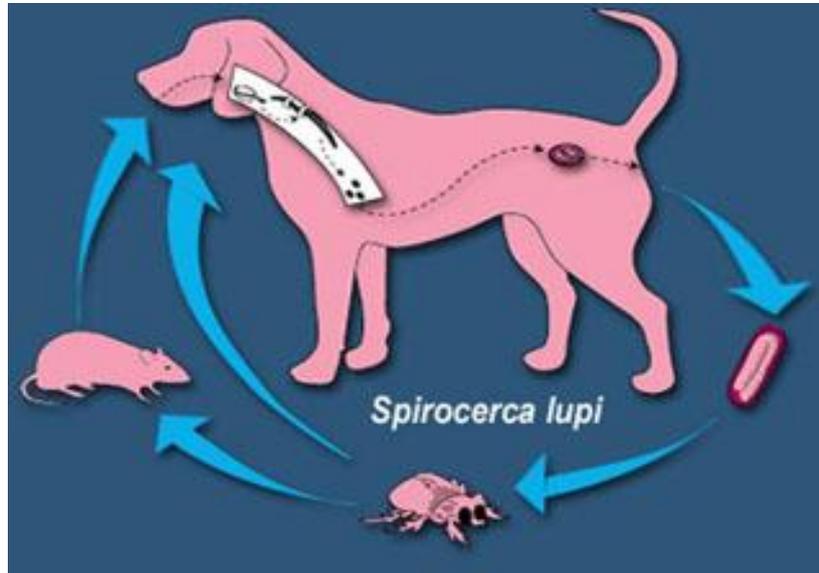
<http://waterfallvet.co.za/artides.htm> 1

What is Spirocerca?

- Spirocerca lupi is a worm that can cause devastating disease or death in dogs
- It is NOT susceptible to routine deworming formulations.



<http://yourownvet.com/?tag=spirocerca-lu> 1

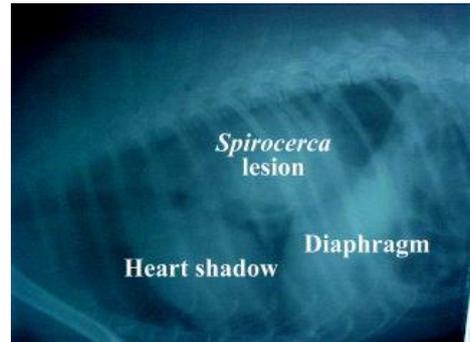


How do dogs get it?

- This worm is transmitted by the ingestion of dung beetles and lizards by dogs.
- Once ingested, the larvae break out and penetrate the stomach wall, swim up the arteries and into the main blood vessel from the heart (aorta). From there it migrates through the chest cavity until it reaches the food pipe (oesophagus).
- Due to irritation, the body lays down fibrous scar tissue to form a hard mass (granuloma) in the oesophagus.
- Here larvae mature, breed and lay eggs that pass into the faeces.

Why is it dangerous?

- Spirocera kills patients by forming scars in the blood vessels (aorta) that weakens the wall and if it bursts, your dog can bleed to death in a few seconds.
- Clots can form and block arteries, usually resulting in death.
- The granuloma obstructs the oesophagus causing:
 - Weight loss
 - Regurgitation
 - Aspiration pneumonia
 - Permanent flabbiness and dilatation of the oesophagus (mega oesophagus)
 - Excessive salivation
- The mass and migration can cause food and bacterial leakage into the chest cavity causing a usually fatal infection (mediastinitis).
- Larvae can migrate to other places like the spinal cord or kidneys and cause serious complications
- The granuloma can transform into cancer that may spread to the lungs.



<http://www.proteaanimalclinic.co.za/kobu-1>



<http://yourownvet.com/?tag=spirocercalu-2>

How is it diagnosed?

Your vet can diagnose this by doing one or a combination of the following tests:

- Careful questioning
- Chest x-rays
- Endoscopic evaluation of the oesophagus
- A special fecal flotation

Sometimes a CT scan is necessary

Can it be treated?

Yes, if it is diagnosed early, one of the following treatments is used:

- **Doramectin (dectomax)** injections every second week for at least 6 treatments
Many studies proved the efficacy of this drug, but it is not registered for use in dogs. Due to severe side effects in certain dog breeds, a gene test should be done to determine whether your dog is susceptible to these side effects.
- **Chemotherapy** is the only option for cancerous masses.

Prevention

- All in contact dogs must be treated
- Additional measures include removing dog faeces and horse faeces from the property daily as dung beetles have been observed eating the faeces. Trying to prevent your dog "hunting" lizards, birds etc is another measure that can be taken, but this is not always practical.