

# Robinson Veterinary Services

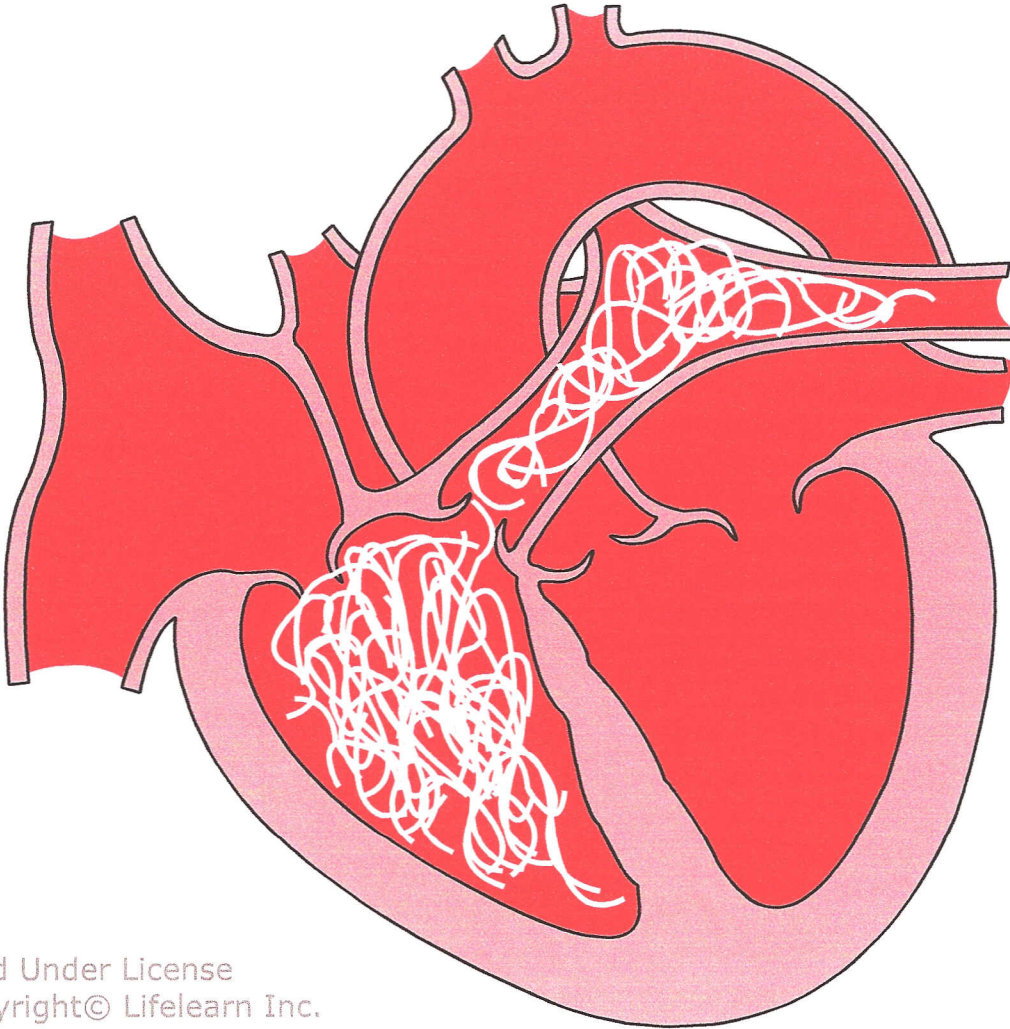
3285 London Line Wyoming, ON N0N1T0

Phone: 519-542-9588

Fax: 519-542-8789

Web: [www.robinsonvet.com](http://www.robinsonvet.com)

Heartworm Disease: Adult heartworms in the right ventricle and pulmonary artery.



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Heartworm larvae migrate to the heart where they mature into adults, averaging around 6 inches in length. They are found in the right ventricle and/or the pulmonary arteries, where their presence hinders the heart's ability to pump blood, and forces it to enlarge. Adult heartworms are capable of living up to 5 years, during which time they continually reproduce more larvae. These larvae can only complete their life cycle by passing through an intermediate host (the mosquito). When the adult heartworms die, they are carried into the lungs where they cause destruction of lung tissue. In the early stages of heartworm disease, the main symptoms are coughing, shortness of breath, and poor exercise tolerance. If the disease is allowed to progress, it can lead to congestive heart failure and death. A simple blood test can be performed to detect the presence of heartworms. Drugs are available that can be taken to prevent a heartworm infection. Further information on this disease can be found in our Client Education Handout Series.