



## SARAH SMITH CARDIOLOGY

### CLIENT INFORMATION SHEET No. 1

# Angiostrongylus vasorum

#### What is *A. vasorum*?

*A. vasorum* is a parasite that infects all members of the dog family. It is a roundworm that lives in the heart (right ventricle) and the major blood vessels supplying the lungs (pulmonary arteries). Also known as “French Heartworm” it should not be confused with heartworm which is caused by an entirely different parasite called *Dirofilaria*. If left untreated *A. vasorum* can cause numerous problems including sudden death



#### How does a dog become infected?

Slugs and snails act as a host for the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage larvae of the worm. If your dog eats an infected slug or snail the larvae are freed into the dogs' intestines. The larvae migrate through the gut wall and into the lymph nodes, where they continue to mature. The 5<sup>th</sup> stage

larvae then migrate through the liver and caudal vena cava to the right ventricle and pulmonary artery where they develop to maturity. All of this takes about 10 days from initial infection.

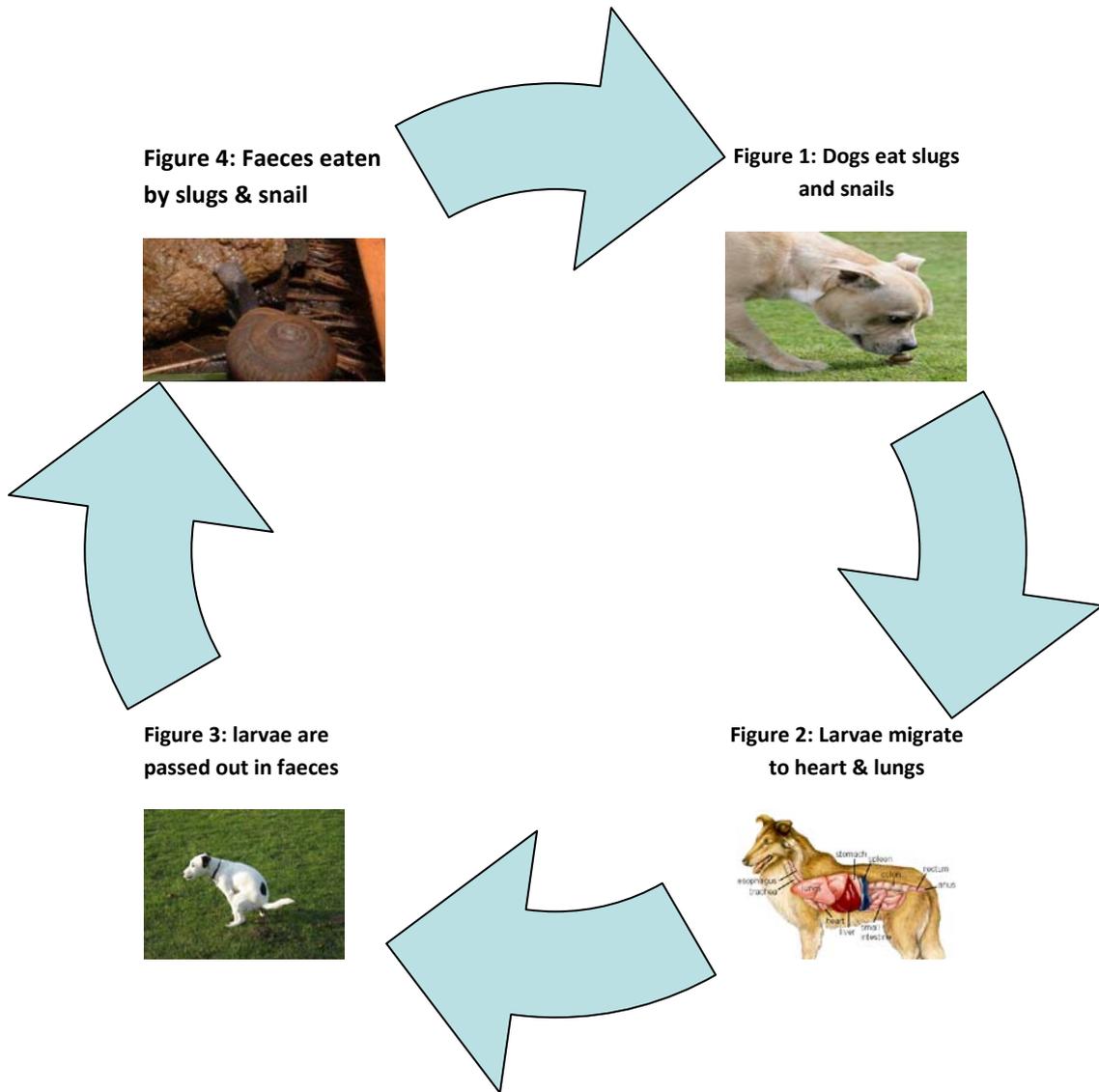
The adult females then produce eggs which are transported by the blood stream to the lungs where the 1<sup>st</sup> stage larvae hatch out in the capillaries and migrate through the connective tissue, which causes an inflammatory reaction. They then pass into the alveoli and up the trachea where they are coughed up and then swallowed.

The larvae travel through the intestines and are passed out into the environment in the dogs faeces. Slugs and snails which come into contact with this faeces are then infected and the whole cycle starts again.



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### Lungworm Cycle



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### What are the signs of Lungworm Infestation?

*Dogs of any age can become infected by lungworm but there appear to be two high risk groups;*

- 1. Younger dogs*
- 2. Dogs that eat slugs and snails.*

*Lungworm can cause a number of different symptoms many of which can be confused with other disease processes, so if your dog shows any of these symptoms you should seek veterinary advice.*

*Symptoms fall into 4 main areas;*

- 1. Breathing  
Coughing  
Dyspnoea (struggling to breath)  
Exercise intolerance*
- 2. Blood Clotting  
Excessive bleeding from minor wounds  
Nose bleeds  
Bleeding into the eyes  
Anaemia (paleness)*
- 3. General Health  
Weight loss  
Poor appetite  
Vomiting  
Diarrhoea*
- 4. Behaviour  
Depression  
General tiredness  
Seizures*

### Can Lungworm be treated?

*There are a variety of medications on the market that kill *A.vasorum* and your veterinary surgeon will be able to prescribe a suitable treatment for your animal. Most dogs once treated make a full recovery.*

*In all cases, however, prevention is better than cure. If your dog is in a high risk group you should consider regular preventative treatment with a suitable licenced product. Again your veterinary surgeon will be able to recommend the best product for your animal.*