



“It’s fun to toy with skinks & other backyard prey, but they may get their own back if carrying hidden nasties”



Be Lungworm Aware

Exploring the backyard jungle is a regular activity for many cats in New Zealand. However, many pet parents are unaware that even sedate ‘prey’ such as snails, can carry hidden dangers which may cause serious health issues for your cat if left untreated.



What is lungworm?

Lungworm is a type of parasite that lives in the airways and small arteries of the lungs.

Why is lungworm important?

Lungworms can cause damage to lung tissue, and lead to severe, life-threatening respiratory disease, especially in kittens, older cats and cats with weakened immune systems.

Lungworm can be difficult to diagnose and symptoms may be non-specific - similar to those seen with other lung conditions or hairballs.

How are cats infected?



LIZARDS



SNAILS



BIRDS



SLUGS



MICE

Cats become infected with lungworm when they eat an animal infected with microscopic lungworm larvae, such as a snail, slug, mouse or rat, lizard or bird.

After being swallowed, the lungworm larvae burrow through the gut wall and migrate to the lungs, where they mature into adult worms and reproduce.

Lungworm larvae are coughed up, swallowed, and excreted in the faeces of the cat.

Mice and rats, birds, lizards and frogs are infected when they eat a lungworm infected snail or slug.

What are the signs of lungworm infection?

Not all cats will show signs of infection, but common symptoms include:

- Persistent cough, often with bouts of intense coughing
- Wheezing, sneezing
- Nasal discharge
- Open-mouthed abdominal breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Lethargy
- Weight loss

Outdoor cats with access to snails or slugs, or cats who hunt mice and rats, birds, lizards and frogs are more likely to become infected. Clinical disease is most common in kittens, older cats and adult cats with other illnesses or weakened immune systems.

For more information, including tips for treatment and prevention, please talk to your vet or see the Advocate® ‘can of worms’ brochure regarding Lungworm.