

# THE AMERICAN HEARTWORM SOCIETY & YOU



Wallace E. Graham, Jr, DVM, President

For this issue's *Heartworm Hotline* column, our regular author, Dr. Clarke Atkins, handed over the reins to Dr. Wallace Graham—the President of the American Heartworm Society (AHS). Because April is *National Heartworm Awareness Month*, Dr. Graham shares the mission of the AHS and how the society can help you provide the best heartworm-related care to your patients.

**T**he American Heartworm Society was founded in 1974 by and for veterinarians with one purpose in mind: **To understand heartworms and the disease they cause, and to pass that understanding along to practicing veterinarians.** Along the way, many outstanding scientists have contributed to this understanding and continue to do so today.

Many of the Society's officers and board members are practicing veterinarians; therefore, it is an organization keenly focused on practitioners, their patients, and their clients. To this end, the AHS has developed initiatives and programs with the practicing veterinarian in mind. Following is a brief description of each and its benefits to you.

## CONFERENCES & MEETINGS

### Triennial Symposium

The Triennial Symposium was the first initiative of the AHS, and is the foremost heartworm continuing education event worldwide. The latest, clinically relevant research is presented by experts from around the world in a forum that is scientifically stimulating and practitioner friendly. The 2013 Triennial Symposium—Heartworms Today: The Search for Solutions—will be held in New Orleans, September 8 through 10. Registration is open at [heartwormsociety.org/annual/2013symposium.html](http://heartwormsociety.org/annual/2013symposium.html).



### NAVC Symposium

Each year the AHS sponsors a half-day program of cutting-edge information at the NAVC Conference ([navc.org](http://navc.org)) in Orlando, Florida. This program draws large, enthusiastic crowds and generates significant interest, which was demonstrated this past January by the hour-long, impromptu question and answer session held by Dr. Matthew Miller after his presentation concluded our 2013 NAVC program.

### Heartworm University

Recognizing that many practitioners are unable to attend destination-based, national meetings, the AHS has taken its message “on the road.” Heartworm University is a 6-hour, RACE-approved case-based program that equips practitioners with the latest information on heartworm disease, prevention, and therapy.

Most of these programs are held in conjunction with other meetings, such as state veterinary medical association meetings, or are stand-alone meetings. Worried that you can't sit through a 6-hour discussion on heartworms? Be aware that the program always receives rave reviews from attendees. A friend of mine who attended the San Antonio meeting said it best: “Wally, I didn't know what I didn't know about heartworms!”

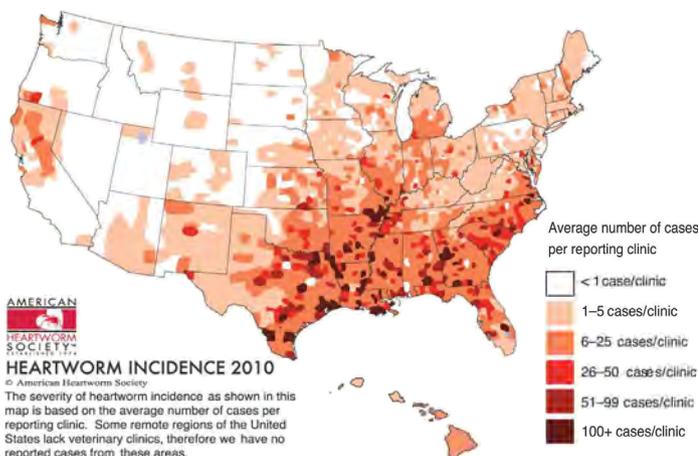
Read about course content and upcoming meeting dates at [heartwormsociety.org/hwu](http://heartwormsociety.org/hwu).

## EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

### Incidence Survey & Map

Every 3 years, the AHS surveys every animal hospital in the country to identify trends in the incidence of heartworm disease. The maps developed from survey data have been instrumental in documenting the continuing spread of the disease. In addition, the maps are an effective client education tool for practitioners interested in increasing compliance with heartworm prevention recommendations.

Download the maps at [heartwormsociety.org/veterinary-resources/incidence-maps.html](http://heartwormsociety.org/veterinary-resources/incidence-maps.html).



### Canine & Feline Guidelines

The AHS has published guidelines for the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of heartworm disease almost since its inception. These guidelines represent the standard of care for heartworm disease and are the definitive “go-to” documents for the practitioner.

In the past, the guidelines were published after each triennial symposium. However, thanks to the advent of the digital age, new information is being generated too quickly for a triennial cycle and, therefore, the Guidelines are now updated on an “as-needed” basis, with press releases issued each time changes are made.

The latest versions are available at:

- **Canine Guidelines:** [heartwormsociety.org/veterinary-resources/canine-guidelines.html](http://heartwormsociety.org/veterinary-resources/canine-guidelines.html)
- **Feline Guidelines:** [heartwormsociety.org/veterinary-resources/feline-guidelines.html](http://heartwormsociety.org/veterinary-resources/feline-guidelines.html)

## MEDIA OUTREACH

### AHS Website

This is the definitive digital source for *all things heartworm*. There are various information resources for practitioners and pet owners, including a children’s section. The Think 12 section, available at [heartwormsociety.org/think12](http://heartwormsociety.org/think12), provides you, the practitioner, with fresh, up-to-date information, ideas, and client handouts to help you improve your clients’ compliance.



### Quarterly Bulletin

As new information becomes available, the quarterly *AHS Bulletin* is published in an easily digestible format 4 times a year. This publication is mailed or emailed to our members, and past issues are available on our website. Case discussions are common and relevant to the many nuances of decision-making required of the practitioner with regard to this complex parasite.

### Ongoing Media Outreach

In an effort to keep practitioners and the public abreast of the latest information on our website and other venues, the AHS reaches out to industry and select consumer media, including blogs, with well-researched and fact-based information. Often, heartworm-related articles that practitioners read are published as a result of, or in cooperation with, an AHS initiative.

### Social Media

Recognizing the impact of Facebook and Twitter on today’s information superhighway, the AHS is using these tools to reach out and provide quality information to interested veterinarians, other veterinary team members, and pet owners.

## MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

The partnership between the AHS and practitioners provides a great opportunity for symbiosis. While you do not need to be a member to enjoy the offerings of the AHS, joining the society not only gives you the best tools to care for your patients and communicate with clients but also supports practical research for improved methods of treating and preventing heartworm disease.

The American Heartworm Society exists for the benefit of the entire profession and its patients—it is our only reason for being. I hope you will avail yourself of the great resources the AHS has to offer and that you will see immediate benefits in the lives of your patients. ■



**Wallace E. Graham, Jr., DVM**, is the current President of the American Heartworm Society and has previously served as Secretary-Treasurer and as a board member for AHS. He is an associate veterinarian at VCA Oso

Creek Animal Hospital in Corpus Christi. Dr. Graham has been an active member of the Texas Veterinary Medical Association, serving as an executive board member and on the Peer Assistance and Ethics and Grievance committees. He served in the U.S. Army’s Veterinary Corps upon receiving his DVM from Texas A&M University.