

HEARTWORM DISEASE

Heartworm disease is a parasite that is transmitted from dog to dog through the bloodstream by mosquitoes. The mosquito bites an infected dog, and then over time, the parasite can then be transmitted to another dog. Once a dog has been infected, the larva travels to the heart and mature into adult worms that can be up to 14" in length! Heartworms can cause significant damage to the heart and lungs and can affect other organs as well. If heartworm disease is not treated, it can be fatal.

Heartworm disease is treatable, but can be very expensive and the treatment is not without complications. The treatment includes running blood work, taking x-rays of the heart and lungs, multiple injections of a drug to kill the adult heartworms and oral medication to kill circulating baby heartworms as well as retesting to be sure your pet has cleared the infection. It is much easier and less costly to prevent heartworm than to treat it.

There are several different kinds of heartworm prevention and based on your dog's needs, we can help you decide what product is best for your pet. Most products that prevent heartworm disease also prevent some of the intestinal parasites that dogs can get. Because some of these parasites are worms that people can get from their dogs (with very serious consequences) we recommend using these products year round.

Puppies that are less than 6 months of age can be started on heartworm prevention without a test. For dogs older than 6 months of age, they have to be tested for heartworm disease first and then on a yearly basis. The reason we test these older dogs is that if they are heartworm positive they can have a severe, life threatening reaction to the heartworm prevention. Puppies are too young to test: from the time a mosquito bites a dog until the time we get a positive test is at least 6 months.