

Heartworm Prevention

The heartworm is a parasite that lives in the blood vessels that take blood from the heart to the lungs. This parasite is transmitted by mosquitoes in the warmest months of the year. Your dog can become infected if a mosquito bites an infected dog and then bites yours. Cats are rarely infected by heartworm parasites.

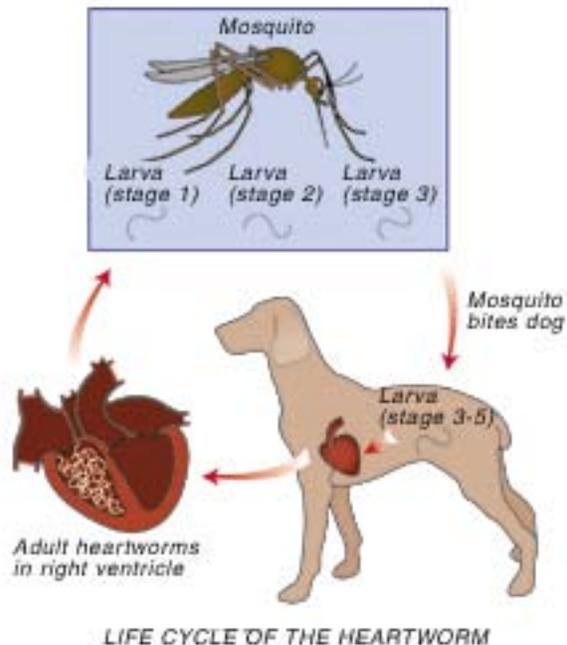
We recommend that all dogs be on heartworm prevention medication!

Why?

- Heartworm is becoming more of a problem in southern Ontario.
- Treatment for the disease is expensive and is sometimes dangerous for the pet.
- Heartworm infection can lead to serious complications such as heart failure in some cases.
- The more dogs we have on prevention for heartworm, the less of a problem it will become in the area. Infected dogs serve as a reservoir for infecting other dogs (including wild canids like wolves and coyotes who never receive prevention medication or testing).

How do I prevent heartworm in my dog?

- We will test your dog every year to be sure he / she is not infected. This screening is important for several reasons:
 1. Many cases of heartworm infection are not detectable until very late in the disease process. Earlier detection means earlier treatment and thus fewer potential complications for your pet.
 2. Some heartworm prevention medications are potentially dangerous to infected animals. We need to be sure your pet is not infected before they start taking them.





3. No prevention is 100% effective and sometimes we accidentally miss a dose or give it a little late. Screening tests give us a chance to pick up the infections that might have 'slipped through the cracks'.
- Once your dog is tested negative for heartworm, he / she should begin taking the prevention medication once monthly beginning June 1st and ending November 1st.

 - If you travel with your dog, please come and talk to us. The farther south you go, the more likely your pet is to encounter heartworm! Depending on your travel plans, we may make changes to our heartworm prevention recommendations for your dog.

Call us anytime to discuss an appropriate heartworm prevention program for your pet!

Heartworm Life Cycle illustration courtesy of LifeLearn Inc.