



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

Heartworm Disease

Heartworm disease is a serious and potentially fatal disease in pets. It is caused by foot-long worms (heartworms) that live in the heart, lungs and associated blood vessels of affected pets, causing severe lung disease, heart failure and damage to other organs. It affects dogs and cats.

Treatment

Once your veterinarian has determined your dog is stable and ready for heartworm treatment, they will recommend a treatment protocol involving several steps. Dogs with no signs or mild signs of heartworm disease, such as cough or exercise intolerance, have a high success rate with treatment. More severe disease can also be successfully treated, but the possibility of complications is greater.

Symptoms

- Cough
- Shortness of Breath/Panting
- Fluid accumulation in the abdomen or chest
- Easily tired or an intolerance of exercise
- Nose Bleeds
- Sudden Death

How does it spread?

The mosquito plays an essential role in the heartworm life cycle. Adult female heartworms living in an infected dog or cat produce microscopic baby worms called microfilaria that circulate in the bloodstream. When a mosquito bites and takes a blood meal from an infected animal, it picks up these baby worms, which develop and mature into “infective stage” larvae over a period of 10 to 14 days. Then, when the infected mosquito bites another dog, cat, or susceptible wild animal, the infective larvae are deposited onto the surface of the animal's skin and enter the new host through the mosquito's bite wound. Once inside a new host, it takes approximately 6 months for the larvae to develop into sexually mature adult heartworms.



Hookworms

Hookworms are intestinal parasites that live in the digestive system of your dog or cat. The hookworm attaches to the lining of the intestinal wall and feeds on your pet's blood. Its eggs are ejected into the digestive tract and pass into the environment through your pet's feces.

Treatment

There are several effective drugs, called anthelmintics, which will eliminate hookworms. Most are given orally and have few, if any, side effects. However, these drugs only kill the adult hookworms. Therefore, it is necessary to treat again in about 2-4 weeks to kill any newly developed adult worms.

Symptoms

- Pale gums, weakness, anemia
- Significant weight loss, bloody diarrhea, dull coat

How does my pet become infected?

Pets may become infected with hookworms by one or all of four routes:

- orally
- through the skin
- through the mother's placenta before birth (in utero)
- through the mother's milk