

IMPORTANT INFORMATION About Heartworm Infection And Treatment

Your dog has been diagnosed with a serious disease caused by *Dirofilaria immitis*, worm-like parasites better known as heartworms. For your pet's health and well-being, prompt veterinary treatment is vital. Steps must be taken both to eliminate the infecting worms and to protect your pet from reinfection.

HOW DID MY DOG GET HEARTWORMS?

(1) The tiny immature heartworms are transmitted through the bite of a mosquito. (2) At first, the parasites move into your dog's tissues. Eventually, they occupy your dog's heart. (3) As the worms grow and reproduce, more immature worms are released into your dog's blood stream. (1) When other mosquitoes bite your dog they pick up these new immature worms and transmit them to the next dog that they bite.

IS HEARTWORM DISEASE SERIOUS?

Yes, it's very serious. Heartworms interfere with the normal flow of blood from the right side of the heart to the vessels serving the lungs. If left untreated, canine heartworm disease can result in congestive failure of the heart and other organs, considerably reduce your dog's quality of life, and ultimately lead to death.

LIFE CYCLE OF THE HEARTWORM



TREATMENT

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF HEARTWORM DISEASE?

At first an infected dog may show few signs of infection, but as the heartworms grow and mature, they cause increasing damage. Your pet may become listless, tire easily after exercise, develop an occasional or persistent cough, and become anemic.

In advanced cases, dogs often suffer congestive heart failure. Complications may develop in the liver and kidneys. The blood supply to the lungs and other major organs may become blocked.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO RID MY DOG OF HEARTWORMS?

A complete physical and medical examination is necessary to determine the health status of your pet and the severity of the disease. Laboratory tests and X-rays may be ordered as part of a complete work-up to help assure treatment tailored to your dog's condition.

Heartworms can be treated with a medication that kills the adults in the heart and lungs. While this medication is highly effective, it is not always 100%. Most heartworm-infected dogs need two injections of this medication, given 24 hours apart. Your dog will be kept in the hospital for this procedure, and will be carefully monitored. Supportive medications may be administered as necessary on a case-by-case basis.

Your veterinarian may also prescribe a medication following heartworm treatment to kill immature heartworms in the blood.

Heartworm disease is a serious health problem, but your veterinarian's knowledge and skill, combined with modern medicines, provide your pet with the best chance for recovery.

HOW SOON CAN MY DOG COME HOME?

In most cases, after the second injection. However, your pet's condition and your veterinarian's judgement will best determine when your pet may go home. Nonetheless,



Dog's heart infested with heartworms



CARE AFTER TREATMENT

heartworm disease and treatment are serious matters. Your pet will need some extra TLC (tender loving care) and rest after treatment.

HOW SOON CAN MY DOG RESUME NORMAL ACTIVITIES?

Rest is necessary to prevent complications resulting from stress on the heart and lungs. Keep your dog quiet and confined for the number of weeks indicated by your veterinarian in the personalized recommendations on the back of this brochure. For most dogs, staying indoors will be sufficient. Very active dogs may need to be more closely confined. Please check with your veterinarian before you allow your dog to resume normal exercise.



ARE THERE ANY PROBLEMS I SHOULD WATCH OUT FOR?

As the worms within the heart and circulatory system are eliminated, some dogs experience a temporary lack of appetite, upset stomach, drooling or panting. Signs of fever, respiratory difficulty, or depression also may occur in response to the presence of dead worms. If these or other signs of discomfort develop, please call your veterinarian at once, who will see that your pet gets appropriate care.

CAN MY DOG GET HEARTWORMS AGAIN?

Yes, unless you protect your pet. Heartworms are easily transmitted by mosquitoes, and having them once does NOT make your dog immune. Following treatment, your pet must begin taking an appropriate heartworm preventive.

WHEN SHOULD I BRING MY DOG BACK TO THE CLINIC?

Your veterinarian will schedule a check-up for your dog to assure a full recovery. Four months after treatment, your veterinarian will do a follow-up test to make sure your dog is heartworm-negative.