



## This Month: Heartworms

With the mosquito season already upon us, heartworm prevention is a must this May.

### What is a Heartworm?

A heartworm is a worm-like parasite that lives and grows in the bloodstream and heart of dogs, cats, and other animals. There is no cure for heartworm in cats, and if untreated it is deadly in dogs. That is why it is so important to keep both dogs and cats on a heartworm preventative year round.

The heartworm is transmitted when a mosquito bites an infected animal and then bites your animal. The immature heartworms will live in the bloodstream of your animal as they develop, and eventually will settle in the right side of the heart, restricting blood flow to the lungs and other important organs.

### Dogs and Heartworms:

Signs of heartworm disease in dogs include lethargy and listlessness, tiring easily after exercise, weight loss and poor appetite, an occasional or persistent cough, and anemia.

Once diagnosed, dogs can undergo a treatment of injections and confinement that can kill the adult heartworms and expel them from the system.

### Cats and Heartworms:

Signs of heartworm disease in cats are unpredictable at best and may appear to be the symptoms of other illnesses. Many cats appear to be perfectly fine until their sudden death, when a necropsy will show heartworms.

If diagnosed, there is no cure for heartworms in cats. Some cats may be resistant and kill the worms on their own; others can be treated for symptoms with fluids, confinement, oxygen therapy, anti-inflammatory drugs, and other measures.

### Heartworm Prevention:

Much like the vaccines your pet gets every year, heartworm prevention is an important part of pet ownership. A monthly flavored “treat” of Heartgard, Tri-heart, or another heartworm preventative will provide enough medicine in the pet’s system for a full month of worry-free heartworm prevention.

Heartworm preventatives, once ingested or applied topically (depending on the product) will spread throughout the system, killing the worms in their larval stage. Unfortunately, none of the heartworm preventatives are able to kill adult heartworms, so if you’re pet hasn’t been on any heartworm preventative in at least six months a heartworm test would be done first to make sure your pet isn’t already infected with adult heartworms.

Why is prevention so important? Dogs and cats on heartworm prevention live longer, healthier lives. For anywhere between \$6-\$10 a month you can prevent a costly recovery or untimely death. It only takes ONE mosquito to infect a dog or cat, and only ONE heartworm to kill your feline friend.

Oops, what if I forgot a month? While it is important to keep you're pet on heartworm protection year round (especially in the hot humid climate of the southeast where mosquitoes are a threat throughout the winter), if you forget to give heartworm medication over one month don't panic. Some heartworm prevention products can actually kill heartworm larvae that are already in the system if they are given within a certain timeframe. Repeated errors in prevention administration, however, will increase the probability that your pet could contract this common parasite. Talk to your vet to make sure it will be safe to put your pet back on heartworm prevention.

For more information on heartworms in dogs and cats, visit the American Heartworm Society's webpage at <http://www.heartwormsociety.org/GeneralInfo.htm>

### Success Story: Oakley!

Oakley was a lab who was starting to become aggressive to other dogs and humans while on a leash. In an attempt to calm Oakley, his owner was actually training him to be more aggressive through positive reinforcement. Petting him and telling him it was 'ok' when he would start to pull her around and become aggressive suggested to Oakley that he was behaving appropriately. Unsure what to do, she brought Oakley to Dr. Sheridan who suggested trying the Gentle Leader leash and video. With the help of the gentle leader to keep him under control, and the use of negative reinforcement during his outbreaks, Oakley slowly and steadily learned that his actions were unacceptable to his owner. Oakley is now a perfect gentleman around other dogs and humans.

### Dates, Upcoming News, Specials:

The FRAH currently has dogs for adoption! Call or stop by the clinic for more information.

New special: buy 10 doses of Revolution and get two free! That is a year's worth of heartworm and flea protection for a ten-month price!

We now also carry Tri-Heart Plus, a cheaper alternative to Heartgard heartworm prevention.

Taking a vacation and don't want to leave your favorite furry friend behind? Check out the following article for tips on vacationing with pets:  
<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4626791/>

### Meet Homer and Jeter:

Homer and Jeter are two yellow Lab brothers who were going to be put down at a local animal shelter. Because of their sweet temperaments, Dr. Sheridan rescued them and has given them a temporary home in our kennel where they wait patiently for a new family. They are very friendly and loving, well-mannered, and great with other dogs. They are up to date on all shots and are neutered.