

CANINE HEARTWORM DISEASE

WHAT IS HEARTWORM DISEASE?

- Canine heartworm disease is a potentially fatal infection caused by worms that live in the heart and the blood vessels of the lungs.
- Mature worms, living in the heart, can grow to be 34 cm. (14 inches) long.

HOW IS HEARTWORM DISEASE TRANSMITTED?

- Heartworm disease is transmitted by mosquitoes.
- Adult female worms living in the heart of an infected dog produce offspring called microfilaria. These baby worms live in the blood stream.
- Mosquitoes taking a blood meal from an infected dog ingest microfilaria with their blood meal.
- The microfilaria develop in the mosquito's mouth parts and then are transmitted into another dog when the mosquito takes another blood meal.
- One bite from a carrier mosquito is all that is required to infect a dog with heartworm.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF HEARTWORM DISEASE?

- Recently infected dogs may not show any sign of the disease but heavily infected dogs develop signs of severe debilitating disease that include persistent cough, reluctance to exercise, reduced appetite, weight loss and even death.

HOW IS HEARTWORM DISEASE DETECTED?

- Detection of heartworm infection is made with a blood test that detects a heartworm substance called antigen.

HOW IS HEARTWORM DISEASE PREVENTED?

- Canine heartworm disease is completely preventable.
- A variety of options exist for prevention including chewable tablets administered monthly or solutions applied topically each month.
- All preventive methods are extremely effective when the drugs are administered properly on a timely schedule.

WHAT IS RECOMMENDED FOR HEARTWORM PREVENTION IN OUR AREA?

- We recommend heartworm prevention for any dog leaving our area and travelling to a heartworm prevalent area, for any dog living in our area frequented by dogs from heartworm prevalent areas or where there is a heavy mosquito population.