

HEARTWORM POST-TREATMENT INSTRUCTIONS

Heartworm Disease is becoming increasingly more common in this area. Several cases are diagnosed each week.

The heartworm lives primarily in the right side of the heart, and in the nearby large blood vessels. The female worms produce large numbers of immature heartworms which circulate in the blood.

The microfilaria (baby heartworms) are ingested by a mosquito biting an infected dog. After living in the mosquito for 1-2 weeks, the microfilaria are injected into another dog when the mosquito feeds. It takes about six months for the heartworm to reach adulthood after infecting the dog.

The important thing for dog owners to remember is that a great deal of damage can occur before any obvious signs are noticed. Delayed treatment may result in heart failure and/or permanent damage to the liver, lungs, and kidneys -- with eventual death.

The signs of heartworm disease which you are most likely to notice include coughing, sluggishness, rapid tiring, and labored breathing.

Diagnosis is made by finding the microfilaria in a blood sample. It will be six or seven months after exposure before microfilaria can be detected in the blood.

Treatment for heartworms consists of killing the adult worms with injectable medication.

The dog may be required to stay at the hospital for 3-4 days.

After treatment, the adult worms die and are carried by the blood to the lungs where they lodge in small blood vessels. There they decompose and are absorbed by the body over a period of several months.

Reactions to the drugs are not uncommon, and there IS ALWAYS some risk involved in treating a dog for heartworms.

Following treatment, **COMPLETE REST** is needed to prevent lung damage from the dead, decomposing worms for 6-8 weeks.

The microfilaria will be killed with an injection approximately 4-6 weeks after treatment to rid the dog of the adult heartworms.

We have a very high degree of success in treating heartworm disease when we get an early diagnosis, before severe heart damage has taken place. Physical examination and laboratory testing will determine whether or not your pet should undergo treatment once heartworms are diagnosed.