

# HEARTWORM FACTS

- Adult Heartworms live in the right side of the heart.
- They are 6-14 inches long. Several hundred may be present in the dog!
- Heartworms impair blood circulation, resulting in damage to the heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys. Serious damage may occur, even before outward clinical signs are detected by the owner.
- Advanced signs include difficult breathing, coughing, tiring easily, listlessness, and loss of weight, and fainting.
- Heartworms are found throughout the United States and Canada.

## **Mosquitoes spread heartworms:**

After ingesting blood from an infected dog, the **MICROFILARIA** (“baby” heartworms) is transmitted to another dog or cat when the mosquito bites it. Once the heartworms mature, they begin reproducing additional microfilaria. This **MICROFILARIA IS NOT DANGEROUS TO THE INFECTED DOG**. A mosquito must ingest the microfilaria before they can become infectious. The mosquito must then inject the heartworm larvae into the susceptible pet. It takes 3 to 6 months for adult Heartworms to develop in a dog after an infected mosquito bites it. Heartworms occur in all breeds of dogs: large and small, shorthaired and longhaired, inside-dogs and outside-dogs. Heartworms also now are known to infect cats. Diagnosis of Heartworms is by blood test to detect the “baby” heartworms in the blood. A special test to detect “occult heartworm disease” is sometimes required when heartworms are suspected, even if the initial screening test is negative, because a small number of dogs may have adult heartworms but yet have no microfilaria in the bloodstream. Treatment is very **SUCCESSFUL** when the disease is detected early. The adult worms are killed with an injectable drug given in a series of 2 or 3 injections. A few days later, the worms begin to die, and are carried by way of the bloodstream to the lungs where they lodge in small blood vessels. They slowly decompose and are absorbed by the body over a period of several months.

## **HEARTWORMS CAN BE PREVENTED!!!!**

We strongly recommend the new once/month heartworm preventives, which also aid in the prevention of other internal parasites. It should be given all year long routine testing for Heartworms once each year is suggested for all dogs!



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