

## WHAT ARE HEARTWORMS?

Heartworm disease is a serious, potentially fatal disease of dogs, cats, and ferrets in the United States and many other parts of the world.

### What causes heartworm disease?

It is caused by foot-long worms (heartworms) that live in the heart, lungs and associated blood vessels of affected pets that lead to severe lung disease, heart failure and damage to other organs in the body.

Heartworms are transmitted from one pet to another when a mosquito bites and takes a blood meal from one infected pet and then bites another pet.

### Is heartworm disease contagious?

Your other pets are NOT in danger of getting heartworm disease from your new dog. Heartworms are ONLY spread through a mosquito bite and not directly from pet to pet. Please be sure that all of your pets are on monthly heartworm prevention year around.

### What are the symptoms of heartworms?

In the early stages of the disease, many dogs show few symptoms or no symptoms at all. The longer the infection persists, the more likely symptoms will develop. Symptoms include:

- Mild to severe persistent cough
- Reluctance to exercise
- Fatigue after moderate activity
- Decreased appetite
- Weight loss

## IF YOU DON'T TREAT THEM...

If untreated, heartworm disease will kill your dog. It causes lasting damage to the heart, lungs, and arteries, and can affect the dog's health and quality of life long after the parasites are gone. As the disease progresses, it can cause caval syndrome, which leads to heart failure and sudden blockages of blood flow that few dogs survive without emergency surgery.

## HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

**Heartworm medication is included in your adoption fee!\***

Thanks to donations from animal lovers like you and grants from foundations, MAS is happy to provide all medications required for heartworm treatment for your pet.

The cost to have the treatment administered by a private vet varies depending on the size of the dog, the protocol used, and how advanced the disease is.

## HOW TO INVOLVE YOUR VETERINARIAN

Your veterinarian will advise you on the best way to treat heartworms - he/she will likely recommend a full diagnostic workup and provide a customized treatment plan for the specific needs of your pet.

If you decide to take advantage of our offer to provide medications for treatment, your vet will need to fill out a heartworm treatment medications request form and send a clinic representative to pick up the medications once they are ready.

## HOW DO YOU TREAT THEM?

### Step 1

Process the dog's adoption. If your new pet is not already spayed or neutered, he or she will stay with us to have surgery in the next several days. If he or she is already fixed, you can take your new family member home today!

### HOW DO YOU TREAT THEM? (cont'd)

When your pet is discharged, he or she will have received:

- An injection that provides 6 months of heartworm prevention
- 30 days of an antibiotic to be given at home
- A heartworm treatment handout with information on how to have your vet request medication for heartworm treatment and a copy of the medication request form. **Please note that this form must be received within 30 days of the adoption date in order to have medications provided.**

### Step 2

Begin preparing your home and your family for your dog's exercise restriction. Get your pet used to kennel time and potty walks on leash.

### Step 3

Once your pet is home, give the prescribed antibiotic (doxycycline) twice daily for 30 days.

### Step 4

Schedule an appointment with your veterinarian to discuss heartworm disease and treatment options.

### Step 5

If you decide to pursue heartworm treatment injections, have your vet complete and submit the medication request form.

### Step 6

Have heartworm treatment completed by your veterinarian.

### Step 7

For two months after the injections, **DO NOT ALLOW YOUR DOG TO RUN AROUND!** This is the time when extremely restricted activity is required. This means confinement to a kennel or small area at all times, with short walks outside on a leash to use the bathroom.

### Step 8

Six months after your pet's initial Proheart 6 injection, it will be time for more heartworm prevention. Please follow up with your veterinarian to determine what heartworm prevention will work best for your pet.

### Step 9

Nine months after the heartworm treatment injections, please take your dog to your private veterinarian to be re-tested to be sure that the heartworms have been cleared. Please note that treating heartworms does not keep your dog from getting them again. Your dog will need to be on heartworm prevention as directed by your vet for the rest of his or her life.

## KEEPING YOUR DOG SAFE DURING TREATMENT

Heartworm disease, as well as the treatment of heartworm disease, can lead to serious risks and complications.

You can reduce your dog's risk of complications by doing the following:



### RESTRICT EXERCISE



You must restrict activity for your heartworm-positive dog until 8 weeks after his or her heartworm treatment injections.

### DO NOT LET YOUR DOG RUN AROUND!

Allowing your dog to run and play excessively will get his/her heart rate up, which can cause the weakened heartworms to shatter abruptly and block off blood flow to the lungs, brain, or other organs. This can lead to a “stroke” or even sudden death.

Restricting your dog's exercise allows the weakened heartworms to absorb slowly, which is much safer for your pet.

We know it's difficult to keep a young, active dog from running and playing. Here are some tips to keep your dog mentally busy and avoid bursts of activity that can put your dog in danger:

- ONLY let your dog outside on a leash. For potty breaks, take your dog out on a leash and come right back in as soon as he's done. Do not let him loose in a yard where he could run around.
- Crate your dog or confine him to a single small room when you're not home.
- Give your dog plenty of low-key enrichment activities that do not require walking around, such as eating his meals from a Kong or puzzle toy.



## YOUR DOG HAS COMPLETED TREATMENT...NOW WHAT?

### Restrict activity

You must not allow your dog to run or get his heart rate up until at least 8 weeks after his final injection.

### Continue giving your dog heartworm prevention medicine

Continue to use heartworm preventative as directed and scheduled by your vet. Your dog will be due for heartworm prevention 6 months after his or her Proheart 6 injection was given.

### Re-test your dog in 9 months

It can take up to 9 months for your dog to be completely cleared of infection. Schedule an appointment at your personal veterinarian 9 months after your dog's final injection to test for heartworms.

### CELEBRATE!

Once your dog has tested negative for heartworms, YAY! It's time to celebrate! He can now run and play and romp all he wants!



## Adopting a Dog with

# HEARTWORM DISEASE

## What To Expect



2350 APPLING CITY CV., MEMPHIS, TN 38133  
901-636-1416 | MEMPHISANIMALSERVICES.COM

SOURCE:  
AMERICAN HEARTWORM SOCIETY  
HEARTWORMSOCIETY.ORG