



FACT SHEET

Heartworm

- Heartworm is transmitted from infected dogs to healthy dogs by mosquito bites. Cats may also become infected.
- Larvae (1mm long) injected into the skin take up to six months to migrate to the heart; there they develop into adults (20-30cm long).
- Severe infestations can result in up to 100 worms, clogging up the right chamber of the heart as well as the artery leading to the lungs.
- Adults can live in the heart for many years, gradually weakening the organ.
- Signs of heartworm disease can take up to nine months to develop; they include lethargy, weight loss and coughing.
- We can easily diagnose heartworm by testing a blood sample.
- While we can successfully treat affected dogs, they could already have sustained some permanent damage to the heart.
- Preventative drugs kill the immature larvae only; they do not kill any adults already present in the heart.

Applications

- Dogs over six months of age should be tested for heartworm before starting a preventative program.
- Heartworm tablets only kill larvae at specific stages of their life, so missing regular doses may allow some larvae to survive to adulthood.
- You can give monthly preventative tablets (Interceptor®, Sentinel® or Heartgard®); treat with a monthly spot-on (Revolution®) or we can inject your dog annually (ProHeart® SR-12).
- An annual injection of ProHeart SR-12 at vaccination or health check time is the easiest way to prevent heartworm.

Recommendations

- Start the heartworm program before six months, preferably at 8-12 weeks.
- For puppies up to six months we recommend the monthly formulations (Heartgard, Interceptor or Revolution), which are made in tablet, chewable or spot-on forms. Once dogs reach six months, the annual heartworm injection is usually easiest.