

## Heartworm Disease

One of the most important things you will do for your pets throughout their lifetime will be giving them heartworm prevention, on a monthly basis, throughout all seasons of the year. Heartworms can be transmittable at all times of the year due to the mosquito population we have here in Florida. Heartworm disease can be fatal and kills pets on a regular basis. According to the Heartworm Society of America, over 250,000 dogs in the United States were labeled heartworm positive in 2004. This number doesn't include all the pets that were not taken to a veterinarian and tested in that year.

Heartworms are transmitted by mosquitoes when they bite and take a blood meal and, over the course of time, can cause congestive heart failure in your pet. Damage to your pet's heart significantly affects quality of life and can manifest into coughing, weak arterial pulse, labored breathing, weight loss, and sudden death. Cats are also susceptible to heartworms, but since they are not the primary host, heartworm disease in cats is less common than dogs. Both indoor and outdoor cats are at risk, but many cats show no symptoms at all. There is a product that can prevent your pet from becoming heartworm positive. What might this product be called you ask? Heartguard.

Heartguard is a once a month prescription product that comes in two forms: tablet and beef-flavored chewy for both cats and dogs. It must be given monthly to be effective. Missing an "occasional" dose can result in heartworm disease. There are two major guidelines that should be followed when giving your pet Heartguard. First, you should always purchase your heartguard from a veterinarian. This ensures that the product came directly from the manufacturer (Merial). If your pet is tested yearly, and you buy a 12 month supply each year from your veterinarian, you will be eligible for the Merial guarantee. Merial guarantees that if your pet ever contracts heartworms they will pay for 100% of treatment and provide you with a 12 month supply of Heartguard, at no charge, as long as your veterinarian has records of purchase from their facility on a regular basis. The second guideline that should be followed when giving your pet Heartguard, is having a heartworm test performed on your pet yearly. Just like all other medications that are on the market, no product is 100% effective at all times. Having your pet tested yearly will ensure you and your vet, that the product your pet is receiving is truly effective. It also helps us to catch if heartworms were contracted after missing a dose, before your pet shows symptoms.

Heartguard Plus also treats and controls roundworms and hookworms that your pet may come in contact with. Dogs and cats of any age can contract and transmit both common intestinal parasites. Some pets will not show signs of intestinal parasite infection but occasionally they will. Some clinical signs would be vomiting, loss of appetite, and/or severe weight loss. Heavy infections in young puppies and kittens may be fatal. Roundworms live in the intestines of their host depriving them of nutrients. Roundworms are transmitted to your pet

by contaminated feces in their environment. Hookworms survive a little differently. Hookworms attach themselves to the intestinal walls of their host and feed on their blood. Hookworms are commonly contracted by ingesting larva in contaminated soil or on blades of grass. Both intestinal parasites can be fatal if not treated and controlled. Not only are these two parasites harmful to your pet they can also be harmful to you and your children. Pets that have intestinal parasites contaminate their surroundings by passing eggs or larva in their stools. The most common places that you can contract intestinal parasites are going to be the same places your pet might ,such as parks, playgrounds, yards, and even inside homes. Roundworms and hookworms can travels through the liver, lungs, and other organs. The most common side effect in people are permanent eye damage or even blindness.

There are many intestinal parasites that your pet may come in contact with throughout its life span. As many parasites that are out there, there are as many dewormers. Most dewormers treat different parasites and dose differently as well. The more common dewormers that you might see used at your veterinarian clinic are going to be products such as Droncit, Strongid, Panacur, and Albon. We recommend that you have your pet tested twice yearly for intestinal parasites along with a monthly treatment for hookworms and roundworms, such as Heartguard.

Note: several over the counter products are sold as "monthly dewormer" and people may assume they are monthly heartworm preventive. They are not and will not protect against heartworms and/or intestinal parasites. Please avoid over the counter medications, unless your veterinarian has advised them.

For more information about heartworm disease, please check the following sources;

Click Below

[Merial \(manufacturer of Heartgard\)](#)

[American Heartworm Society](#)