



1333 Plaza Blvd, Suite E, Central Point, OR 97502 * www.mountainviewvet.net

WHY SHOULD I GIVE MY DOG HEARTWORM PREVENTATIVE?

Robert J. Landon, DVM

Because your pet is part of the family and you are a conscientious pet owner that wants to prevent disease, you should give your dog heartworm preventative monthly. And that's not all, because some diseases that your dog gets can be passed to you and your children too. Your heartworm preventative should prevent two of these also.

Heartworm disease is a parasite infection of the blood. Transmitted from dog to dog by the mosquito, the disease eventually causes signs of congestive heart failure; a chronic cough, shortness of breath, weight loss, and collapse. The worm takes about 30 to 60 days to migrate from the point of the mosquito bite to the heart, where it molts to the next life stage. By giving the preventative monthly, all migrating worms are killed before they reach the heart. If no preventative is given, the worms eventually make it to the heart, become adult worms and react with the lining of the heart and interfere with blood flow.

Heartworm disease is a geographical disease because of its dependence on climate and the mosquito. Unfortunately, heartworm has been found throughout Oregon and southern Oregon in particular has a high incidence. Because the weather is so variable from year to year here, heartworm preventative should be given year round. Cats can get heartworm disease too. Although we don't treat them the same, they too should be on a preventative.

Today, most heartworm preventatives also control roundworms and hookworms. These two worms infect your dog's and cat's intestines and are spread in the stool. After a couple weeks in the environment, the eggs in the stool sporulate and are infective to other dogs, cats, and people too. Each year many children are blinded by the migration of the roundworm to the eye. By giving your dogs and cats heartworm preventative monthly, you are also preventing them from contaminating your yard with roundworm eggs.

Most reputable heartworm preventatives come with some kind of guarantee from the manufacturer that if your pet is tested annually and you give preventative monthly, they will cover the cost of treatment if your dog gets heartworm disease. This is not true for some preventatives sold over the internet, so make sure you are buying your preventative from an authorized distributor.

