



Michigan Anti-Cruelty Society

What is heartworm disease?

It is a potentially deadly disease caused by worms that live in the heart, lungs & blood vessels. Heartworms can cause lung disease, heart failure & damage to other organs in the body.

How does your dog get heartworm disease?

Heartworm disease is passed by mosquitoes. Microscopic baby worms called microfilaria circulate in the bloodstream of an infected dog. These are picked up by the mosquito as it bites and takes a meal. Over the next 10-14 days, the microfilaria develops into the “infective stage” while in the mosquito. After that time these can be transmitted to another dog. Once inside the new host, it takes about 6 months for the larvae to develop into mature adult heartworms. Once mature, heartworms can live for 5-7 years in dogs.

How do you know if your dog has it?

The only way to know if your dog has heartworm disease is through a blood test. Dogs in the early stages of heartworm disease can appear to be happy and healthy. They may not show any outward signs of the illness. Those in the later stages can develop a cough, decreased appetite, decrease in activity level, weight loss and in extreme cases sudden death.

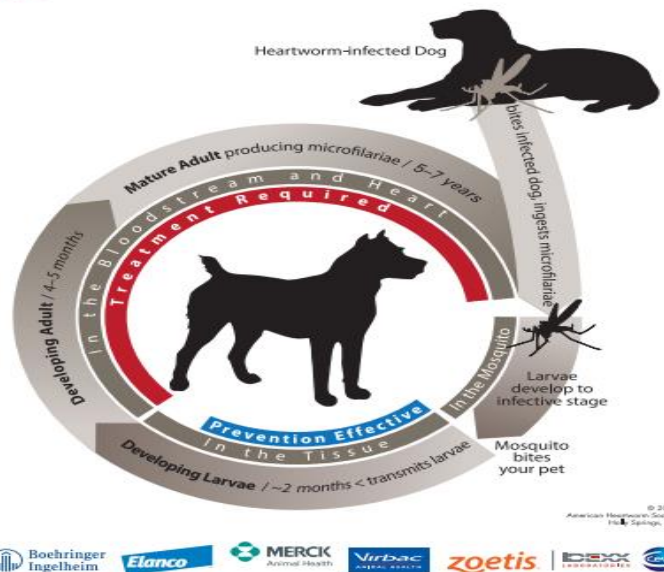
My dog is heartworm negative- Now what?

That is great news that your dog is currently heartworm negative! If your dog has not had a heartworm test before or if your dog has not been on prevention, then a heartworm test should be repeated in 6 months. If your dog has been on prevention, then a heartworm test is due in 12 months. Keep your dog on prevention!! If you have a puppy, they should start prevention at 6-8 weeks and be tested for heartworm disease at 7 months of age.

My dog is heartworm positive- Now what?

Hearing that your pet has heartworm disease is very scary, but most infected dogs can be successfully treated. We follow the American Heartworm Society’s guidelines for treatment: <https://www.heartwormsociety.org/>

- Your pet will need bloodwork and X-rays to help the doctor confirm the diagnosis of Heartworm disease.
- Restrict your pet’s activity. Exercise can increase the rate at which damage the heart and lungs occurs.
- **Keep your pet on heartworm prevention!- This will decrease new infections and the spread to other animals.**
- Antibiotics will be given for 30 days: killing bacteria that live in the worm helping it survive and reproduce.
- 60 days after the start of the antibiotic course: the dog will receive their first treatment injection.
- 30 days after the first injection: the dog will receive the 2nd and 3rd injection 24 hours apart.
- 6 months after finishing treatment: another test needs to be done to confirm that treatment has been successful.



How do you stop heartworm disease?

Prevention!!! Prevention is the key to stopping heartworm disease. The only way to ensure the least amount of risk for your pet is to keep them on prevention year-round! There are several options for prevention that we offer at MACS Veterinary clinic. We offer monthly chewable tablets; HEARTGARD PLUS, SENTINEL & SIMPARICA TRIO. We offer a topical monthly dose; REVOLUTION and an injection that lasts 12 months, PROHEART 12.