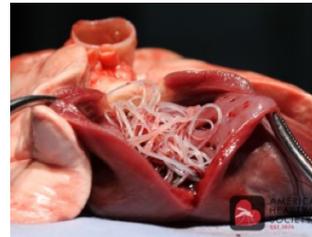




In early 2018, S.O.A.R. has treated two dogs who tested positive for Heartworms. **Dr. Leslie Brooks**, S.O.A.R.'s Veterinarian, explains a bit more about these parasites that are often misunderstood.

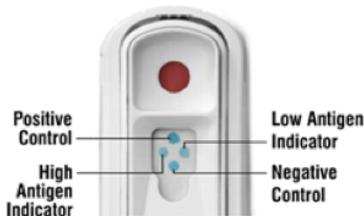


What are heartworms?

Heartworms are blood parasites that ultimately end up living in a dog's heart and lungs; hence the name "heart-worm". They are transmitted by mosquitos. When a mosquito that is carrying baby heartworms bites a dog, the little parasites are injected into the dog's bloodstream. It takes about 6 months for them to travel to the dog's heart and lungs and grow up into adult heartworms. This is where they begin to wreak havoc and can cause coughing, heart failure, and even death.

How Common are Heartworms and How are they Diagnosed?

VERY COMMON! Especially in Indiana. Just within the past 5 months, I've seen at least 5 dogs diagnosed with heartworm disease.



"BUT I DON'T SEE ANY WORMS IN MY DOG'S STOOL..."

That's because heartworms stay in the blood, heart and lungs. They do not pass through the intestinal tract and will not be seen in the stool **The only way to test for them is to test a blood sample.**

Heartworm Disease is Preventable!

Keeping your dog on heartworm prevention tablets or using topically applied gels **EVERY MONTH OF THE YEAR** will help prevent your dog from developing heartworm disease. Heartworm prevention has a “back kill” effect. This means that if your dog was bitten by an infected mosquito in late October and you continue to give the heartworm prevention each month throughout the winter, it will prevent that baby heartworm from developing further and becoming an adult heartworm. If you stop giving heartworm prevention during the winter months, you risk your dog developing heartworm disease. ***IN FACT, most of the diagnoses of heartworm disease occur in the spring time, coming out of winter.***



Is Heartworm Disease Treatable?

For most dogs, **yes**, it can be treated. For some dogs, though, it is too risky to treat them if the disease is too far progressed. The treatment is very expensive and it involves multiple day trips to the veterinary clinic. Multiple injections are given in the dog’s muscle, which kills off the adult heartworms. These injections come with risks and it’s best to prevent heartworm disease than have to treat it. Also, during treatment the dog has to be on strict bed rest for a few months, which can be very difficult for some dogs.

What about Cats?

Cats, too, can get heartworm disease! It’s less common in cats, but if a cat gets infected with heartworms it could die suddenly without any warning signs. Heartworm disease is even more deadly in cats than it is in dogs and there is **NOT ANY TREATMENT** for heartworm disease in cats. The best way to prevent it is to apply heartworm prevention monthly on your cat, especially if they like to spend time outdoors.

For more information, visit: www.heartwormsociety.org