

Understanding and Preventing Dog Heartworm Disease

- ✘ Dog Heartworm Disease has become a very serious problem all across the United States. Infection with heartworm is transmitted from dog to dog by mosquitoes, and has been more prevalent in the warm southern coastal areas where the larger mosquito populations are abundant.
- ✘ Dog Heartworm Disease is caused by a type of worm called a nematode. This nematode (*Dirofilaria immitis*) lives as an adult in the right side of a dog's heart. The male nematodes can measure up to 6 inches in length, while the females reach lengths around 12 inches.
- ✘ Symptoms:
 - ✘ Visible signs of heartworm disease may not appear for a full year after infection, and the disease may become well advanced before the dog shows any symptoms. The symptoms usually do not appear until the nematodes have reached the adult stage.
 - ✘ Typical symptoms: coughing, labored breathing, tire easily, general weakness
 - ✘ In advanced stages, the dog's heart, liver, and lungs become badly damaged.
- ✘ Cure is difficult to impossible in the advanced stages, and many dogs die from circulation failure.
- ✘ Veterinarians can often diagnose the presence of these nematodes in the earlier stages, through regular checkups
- ✘ Prevention:
 - ✘ Once the heartworm disease is established, it is difficult to control. Vaccines are not available to immunize against the parasite.
 - ✘ Your veterinarian will have medications to kill the different stages of heartworm, and a medication to prevent heartworm disease from occurring.
 - ✘ In addition, keep your dogs away from mosquito-infested areas as much as possible and use insect repellents to protect your pet.
- ✘ Any additional information can be obtained from the City of Jacksonville Mosquito Control Division or contact your veterinarian.



City of Jacksonville
Department of Regulatory and Environmental Services
Mosquito Control Division
1321 Eastport Road
Jacksonville, FL 32218
Spray Requests: (904) 630-CITY (630-2489)

