

## ***Dogs Need Year Round Heartworm Prevention***

### ***The Disease***

Heartworm disease develops when a dog is bitten by a mosquito carrying microscopic heartworm larvae (immature worms). As a mosquito feeds, the larvae are deposited on the dog and penetrate the skin to begin their migration into the bloodstream. Adult heartworms can grow up to 12" in length and reside in the right side of the heart and pulmonary arteries leading to lung disease and heart failure.

### ***Unpredictable Seasons***

Years ago it was considered acceptable in some northern states to administer heartworm prevention only during the warmer months. Increasingly it is becoming **difficult to predict when mosquito season begins and ends** due to both environmental and climatic factors. It takes just one warm winter day for mosquitoes to thrive and an unprotected dog to be at risk.

### ***Prevalence and Risk***

While the risk of heartworm disease varies between states and even communities, this disease is becoming more prevalent and can be found nationwide. Unprotected dogs and some species of wildlife serve as a reservoir for the spread of disease. Relocation of dogs, through rescue organizations and humanitarian efforts following natural disasters, has the potential to introduce heartworm disease to previously nonendemic areas. Alternately, unprotected **dogs traveling with owners** to high-incidence areas are at risk of exposure.

### ***Bonus Benefits***

Year round heartworm prevention has the added benefit of **controlling intestinal parasites** which have the potential to not only affect your dog but your family as well.

### ***Testing***

**Annual testing** is recommended to monitor the effectiveness of any heartworm prevention program. More frequent testing may be warranted depending on individual risk factors. All dogs more than six months of age should be tested for heartworms prior to beginning a preventive program. Retesting should be performed six months following the start of prevention or any lapse in administration.

### ***Prevention is Key***

Heartworm disease is a complicated illness that is both difficult and costly to treat. **Prevention is always more safe and affordable than treating** dogs with adult heartworm disease.

Please visit the website of the American Heartworm Society ([www.heartwormsociety.org](http://www.heartwormsociety.org)) for more in-depth information regarding prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of heartworm disease.