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## Did you know?

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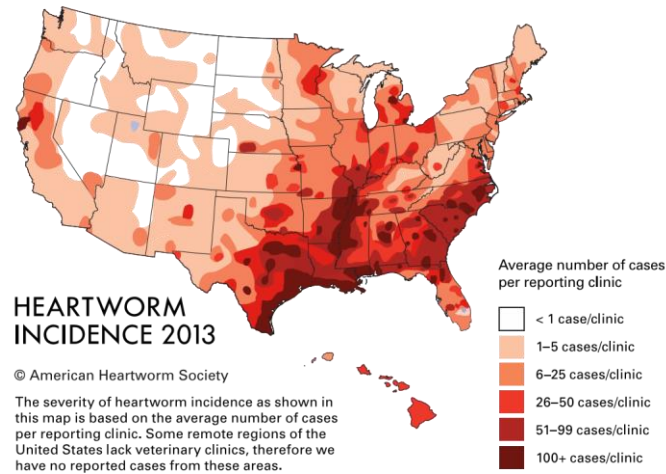
- **Heartworms are spread by mosquitoes**—if there are mosquitoes in your area, your dog is at risk!
- **Even dogs that look healthy can be infected** with heartworms, so annual testing for heartworm disease is recommended.
- **Annual testing is critical** to avoid a delay in detecting early infection and starting life-saving therapy, as heartworms can cause significant damage to your dog's heart and lungs.
- **Heartworm preventive medications are very effective** when given properly on the prescribed schedule.
- **The best way to reduce the risk of heartworm infection in your dog is to give the preventive medication year-round.** Mosquitoes can survive all year, even in parts of the country where there is a cold winter, so all dogs are at risk.
- **While heartworms can be eliminated, prevention is always safer and more affordable** than treating adult heartworm infections.



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## Heartworm disease is found in all 50 states.

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**The cornerstone of heartworm management is prevention.**

**The American Heartworm Society recommends year-round administration of a heartworm preventive medication and annual testing for heartworm disease for all dogs.**



To learn more about the increasing threat of heartworm disease, talk to your veterinarian and visit the American Heartworm Society website at [www.heartwormsociety.org](http://www.heartwormsociety.org).

Learn more about the Association of Shelter Veterinarians at [www.sheltervet.org](http://www.sheltervet.org).

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## What You Need to Know about Heartworms and Your Newly Adopted Dog

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**Keep Them Safe. Love Them Always.**

## Congratulations on the adoption of your new family member!

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Rescuing and rehoming animals is a team effort, and we would not be able to save animals if it weren't for dedicated adopters like you! Thank you.

Along with the joys of pet ownership come responsibilities, and one of the most important of these is protecting your dog against heartworm disease.

Albert's Dog Lounge takes great pride in our mission and the work we do with senior and special needs dogs. All dogs are tested for heartworm upon intake. If a dog tests positive for heartworms, it is treated according to the protocols set forth by the American Heartworm Society prior to adoption.

### What is all the hype about?

Heartworm is fatal if not treated. Though it may take years for a dog to succumb and a relatively long time to become symptomatic, it is deadly nonetheless.

### What happens if a dog is positive for heartworms?

Heartworm can be treated, but treatment is costly (\$300-\$2,000 depending on the vet and your location). Further, the injections given to treat it are very painful for the dog. Secondly, it is imperative that the recovering dog is not allowed to become very active - no running, jumping, or long walks - during the course of treatment which usually lasts about two months. The reason for this is because if the dog's heart rate becomes elevated while the parasites are dying, a piece of one could break off and block a blood vessel in much the same way as a blood clot will, and that can prove fatal as well. In addition to the painful shots which are injected into the deep muscles of the dog, the treatment also includes an oral medication. Once the infected dog has completed the course of treatment (usually about two months) and tests negative, they are considered "cured". In other words, there should be no lasting repercussions other than in severely advanced cases.

### How are heartworms killed?

The first injection is given after the dog has taken Doxycycline (an antibiotic) for 30 days. The second injection is given one month later, and the third injection is given 24 hours after the second injection. This treatment protocol kills some of the worms after the first injection and allows the body to clear them. The second and third injections kill the remaining worms. By spreading out the treatment, there is less stress on the dog's body and the treatment is less risky.

### How do you stop heartworm?

Preventative treatment is given on a monthly basis either by chewable tablet or topical application, depending on your preference and vet's recommendation. The preventative meds can be purchased online, but you still must have a prescription for it from your vet. Dogs should be tested annually, and preventatives given year round. Annual testing is also necessary, even when dogs are on a heartworm preventative medication. These medications are highly effective, but dogs can still become infected, especially if you miss one dose or give it late. Dogs can also unknowingly spit out the oral medication or rub off the topical medication.

### Is heartworm contagious?

Heartworm is not directly contagious to other dogs (except if a mosquito bites the infected one and then bites an uninfected one, of course.) The mosquito plays an essential role in the heartworm life cycle. Adult female heartworms living inside a dog, coyote, wolf, or fox produce microscopic offspring called microfilaria that circulate in the bloodstream. When a mosquito bites and takes a blood meal from an infected animal it picks up the microfilaria, which mature into an "infective stage" larva inside the mosquito over a period of 10-14 days. Then, when the infected mosquito bites another dog, cat, or susceptible wild animal, the infective larvae are deposited into that animal. These larvae then go on to become adult heartworms in approximately 6 months. Once mature, heartworms can live for 5-7 years in dogs and 2-3 years in cats. Because of the longevity of these worms, each mosquito season can lead to an increasing number of worms in an infected animal.

### When should I test for heartworm?

Adopters of new dogs must be particularly careful because heartworm infections are not detectable until about six months after a dog has been bitten by a heartworm-infected mosquito, making it possible for an infected dog to have tested negative. For this reason, it's imperative your new dog remain on heartworm preventatives monthly. At minimum testing should be done annually, unless instructed differently by your vet or if there is ever a lapse in heartworm preventative for more than two months.

### When should I re-test a dog who has been treated for heartworm?

After treating a dog with injections, adult worms may continue to die for more than a month following this treatment. Heartworm antigen testing is the most reliable method of confirming that all of the adult heartworms have been eliminated. Although many dogs are antigen-negative 4 months after the last injection, it can take longer (up to 6 months) for the antigen to be completely cleared from some dogs. If your dog has tested positive, we do not recommend re-testing your dog for 4-6 after the last injection.

**If you ever have additional questions about heartworm and your dog, please email [albertsdoglounge@gmail.com](mailto:albertsdoglounge@gmail.com)**

