

## Dog Heartworm Prevention

- Eliminate standing water on your property.
- Limit your dog's exposure to mosquitoes.
- Visit your dog's veterinarian for dog heartworm preventative medicine.
- Stop the spread of heartworm, make sure your dog is heartworm free.



Mosquitoes transmit the parasitic heartworm through their bite. Limiting a dog's exposure to mosquitoes decreases their chance of contracting the parasite.



Resources:

American Heartworm Society.  
<http://www.heartwormsociety.org/>

Crans, Wayne. "Does your dog have heartworm? (a mosquito-borne disease)" Cooperative Extension Service. Rutgers the State University of NJ.



Morris County Mosquito Commission

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Morris County  
Mosquito Commission



## Dog Heartworm *Dirofilaria immitis*

**Did you know dog heartworm is spread through the bite of an infected mosquito?**

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# What is Dog Heartworm?

Dog Heartworm is a disease common in canines throughout most of the United States. It is caused by a parasitic roundworm

(nematode) that lives its adult life primarily in the heart and large vessels of the lungs. The

worms seriously impair the operation of the heart by prohibiting

proper valve closure. In heavier infestations, the blood vessels become clogged by the worms. It is transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito.



**A dog's heart infested with the parasitic round worm.**

## The role of the mosquito

A female mosquito takes a blood meal from a dog infected with the microscopic larval stage of heartworm called microfilariae. The microfilariae migrate to the mosquito's digestive tract and transform.

Next they break into the mosquitoes body cavity and migrate to the mouthparts. As the mosquito takes her blood meal, the larvae are deposited onto the skin of the host animal. The worms burrow into the skin and lodge in the tissue for several months. Once the worms have increased in size they enter the bloodstream and eventually lodge in the chambers of the heart where they mature.

## Prevention is Key

### Limit Your Dog's Exposure to Mosquitoes

- **Remove any containers that can hold water from the yard.**
- **Change animal's drinking water daily.**
- **Recycle any abandoned tires.**
- **Fill in ruts and low areas on property.**
- **Stock ornamental ponds with fish.**
- **Change water in birdbath every 2–3 days.**
- **Limit your dog's outside activity when mosquitoes are present.**
- **Eliminate mosquito habitat by eliminating standing water.**

### Other Forms of Prevention

- **A monthly heartworm prevention medicine is available through your veterinarian. Always follow your veterinarian's advice.**
- **A topical pesticide that is absorbed into the dog's skin can be used to deter mosquitoes, as well as fleas and ticks.**

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## Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms of dogs with the advanced stage of heartworm experience increased fatigue, shortness of breath, frequent coughing, and exhaustion. In very severe cases dogs will experience jaundice, heart failure and death. See your veterinarian immediately if you suspect dog heartworm.

## Treatment

Heartworm is sometimes treatable with very harsh chemicals that are designed to kill and slowly disintegrate the worms. If all the worms were killed at the same time the animal would suffocate from the tissues. Microfilariae still in the bloodstream are eliminated with another treatment. Treatment lasts between 4 to 6 months, includes isolation of the animal and is very expensive.

Remember: an infected dog can be a constant source of infection for heartworm free dogs.

**Prevention is the best medicine.**



**Always follow your veterinarian's advice. Only they can prescribe preventative medicine. Diagnosis must also come from your veterinarian.**