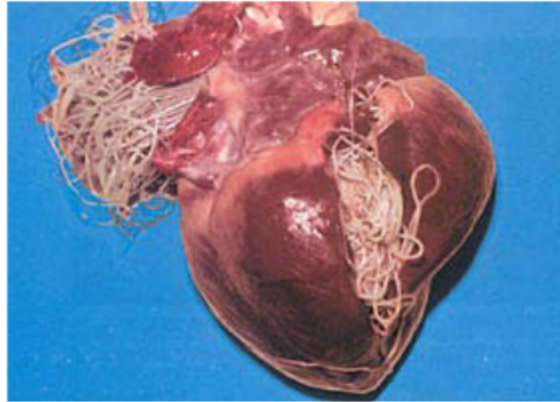


## HEARTWORM: THE QUIET KILLER

Heartworms are potentially lethal parasites acquired when a pet is bitten by an infected mosquito, which injects the heartworm larvae into the dog's bloodstream. As the worms mature, they migrate to the heart and pulmonary arteries, where they eventually clog valves and blood vessels. This reduces the blood supply to other organs, like the kidneys, liver and lungs. Left untreated, they result in severe heart disease, organ failure and death.



**Canine heart infected with Stage 5 (fatal) heartworms**

Worms range from 3 to 14 inches in length, and a dog may have as many as 300 worms. Infected dogs may show no signs of disease for several years. By the time symptoms do appear – typically, shortness of breath, chronic cough and loss of stamina – the disease is well advanced. Infected dogs sometimes faint or may die suddenly during exercise.

You can spare your dog this gruesome fate by keeping him on a monthly heartworm prevention product, such as Heartgard Plus or Tri-Heart, which come in pills or chewable form. You can purchase this from your vet or, if your vet gives you a prescription, from pet supply catalogs and websites. For maximum effectiveness, give your dog the required dose on the same day each month, every month of the year.

Note: heartworm prevention only kills the immature larvae – NOT the adult worms. If your dog is already infected with adult worms, your vet must treat the dog with immiticide – a procedure that is relatively expensive and not without risks. Some dogs experience liver failure after treatment, and all must be kept quiet for a month, to prevent potentially fatal embolisms while the adult worms die off and break up into the bloodstream. Clearly, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!

To truly ensure your dog's health, you should also have your vet give him an OCCULT heartworm test every year. This test typically costs about \$20 and is the best way to make sure your dog hasn't contracted this deadly parasite. You can have it done during your dog's regular annual exam. It's a good idea to do this test annually even with year-round heartworm prevention because no medicine is 100% effective 100% of the time, and no test is completely infallible, either. (If you want to be even safer, have your vet examine a blood smear for larvae at the same time as the occult test.) So prevent, test, prevent, repeat!

Remember, mosquito season is heartworm season. And, in warm climates, such as the southeastern United States, mosquito season lasts all year round. **Your dog is not immune, even if it stays indoors most of the time.** One bite from one infected mosquito is all it takes.

**PLEASE keep your dog on heartworm prevention year-round. The cost of prevention is minimal compared to the cost of treatment, and your pet's life is priceless.**

**Heartworm is the single most preventable disease in dogs. ISN'T YOUR DOG WORTH THIS SMALL INVESTMENT TO ENSURE HIM A LONG, HEALTHY LIFE?**