

HEARTWORM DISEASE IN DOGS

Understanding Prevention, Testing & Treatment

Heartworm disease is a serious and potentially life-threatening condition caused by parasitic worms that live in the heart, lungs, and blood vessels of infected dogs. The disease is spread by mosquitoes and can cause severe damage to the heart and lungs if left untreated.

Heartworm disease is far easier to prevent than treat.

HEARTWORM
DISEASE IS
SPREAD BY
MOSQUITOES AND
CAN BE PREVENTED
WITH YEAR-ROUND
PROTECTION.



? WHAT IS HEARTWORM DISEASE?

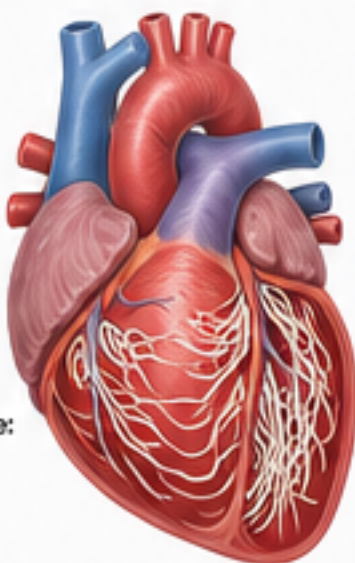
Heartworm disease is caused by the parasite *Dirofilaria immitis*.

Adult worms live in:

- ✓ The heart
- ✓ Pulmonary arteries
- ✓ Blood vessels supplying the lungs

In severe cases, heartworms can cause:

- ✓ Heart failure
- ✓ Lung disease
- ✓ Organ damage
- ✓ Death



💡 DID YOU KNOW?

- 🐾 A single mosquito bite can transmit heartworm larvae to your dog.
- 🐾 Dogs may carry heartworms for months before showing any obvious signs of illness.
- 🐾 Heartworm disease occurs throughout Australia, including inland regions.



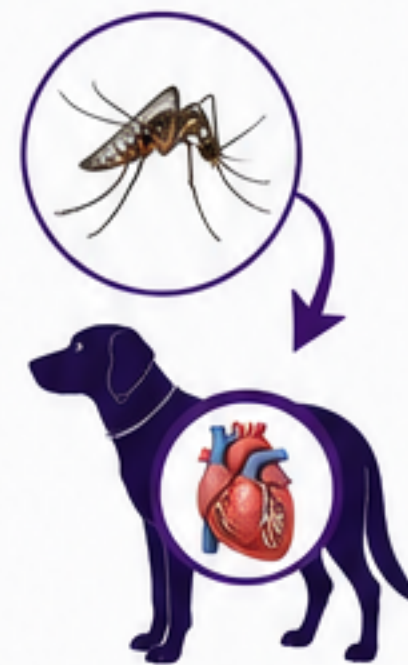
1 HOW DO DOGS GET HEARTWORM?

Heartworm spreads through mosquito bites.

The life cycle involves:

- 1 Mosquito bites an infected dog
- 2 Mosquito carries microscopic larvae
- 3 Larvae are transmitted to another dog
- 4 Worms mature over several months
- 5 Adult worms develop in the heart and lungs

Dogs cannot catch heartworm directly from other dogs.



2 RECOGNISE THE SIGNS

Many dogs show no signs early in the disease.

As infection progresses, signs may include:

- ✓ Persistent cough
- ✓ Reduced exercise tolerance
- ✓ Lethargy
- ✓ Weight loss
- ✓ Breathing difficulties
- ✓ Collapse
- ✓ Swollen abdomen
- ✓ Heart failure



⚠️ *Advanced heartworm disease can become life-threatening.*

3 WHICH DOGS ARE MOST AT RISK?

Higher-risk dogs include:

- 🐾 Dogs not receiving prevention
- 🐾 Outdoor dogs
- 🐾 Hunting dogs
- 🐾 Working dogs
- 🐾 Dogs living near waterways
- 🐾 Dogs in mosquito-prone areas

Any unprotected dog can become infected.



4 HOW IS HEARTWORM DIAGNOSED?

Your veterinarian may perform:

- ✓ Annual heartworm testing
- ✓ Blood antigen testing
- ✓ Microfilaria testing
- ✓ Chest radiographs
- ✓ Ultrasound examinations
- ✓ Additional blood tests

Routine testing is recommended even for dogs on prevention.



5 PREVENTION

Heartworm prevention may include:

- ✓ Monthly chewable tablets
- ✓ Monthly topical products
- ✓ Annual heartworm injections
- ✓ Regular veterinary health checks
- ✓ Routine testing as recommended

Prevention is safe, effective, and far less costly than treatment.



6 TREATMENT OPTIONS

Treatment depends on the severity of infection.

Management may include:

- ➕ Restricting exercise
- ➕ Treating adult worms
- ➕ Eliminating circulating larvae
- ➕ Monitoring heart and lung function
- ➕ Hospitalisation when required
- ➕ Ongoing follow-up testing

Treatment can take several months.



7 WHY PREVENTION IS IMPORTANT

Heartworm disease can cause:

- ⚠️ Permanent lung damage
- ⚠️ Heart disease
- ⚠️ Reduced quality of life
- ⚠️ Expensive treatment costs
- ⚠️ Life-threatening complications

Most cases can be prevented with routine parasite prevention.



8 EVERY DOG COUNTS

Heartworm disease can be silent for months or even years before signs appear.

Speak with your veterinarian about the most appropriate heartworm prevention program for your dog.

Year-round prevention and regular testing are the best protection against heartworm disease.



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