

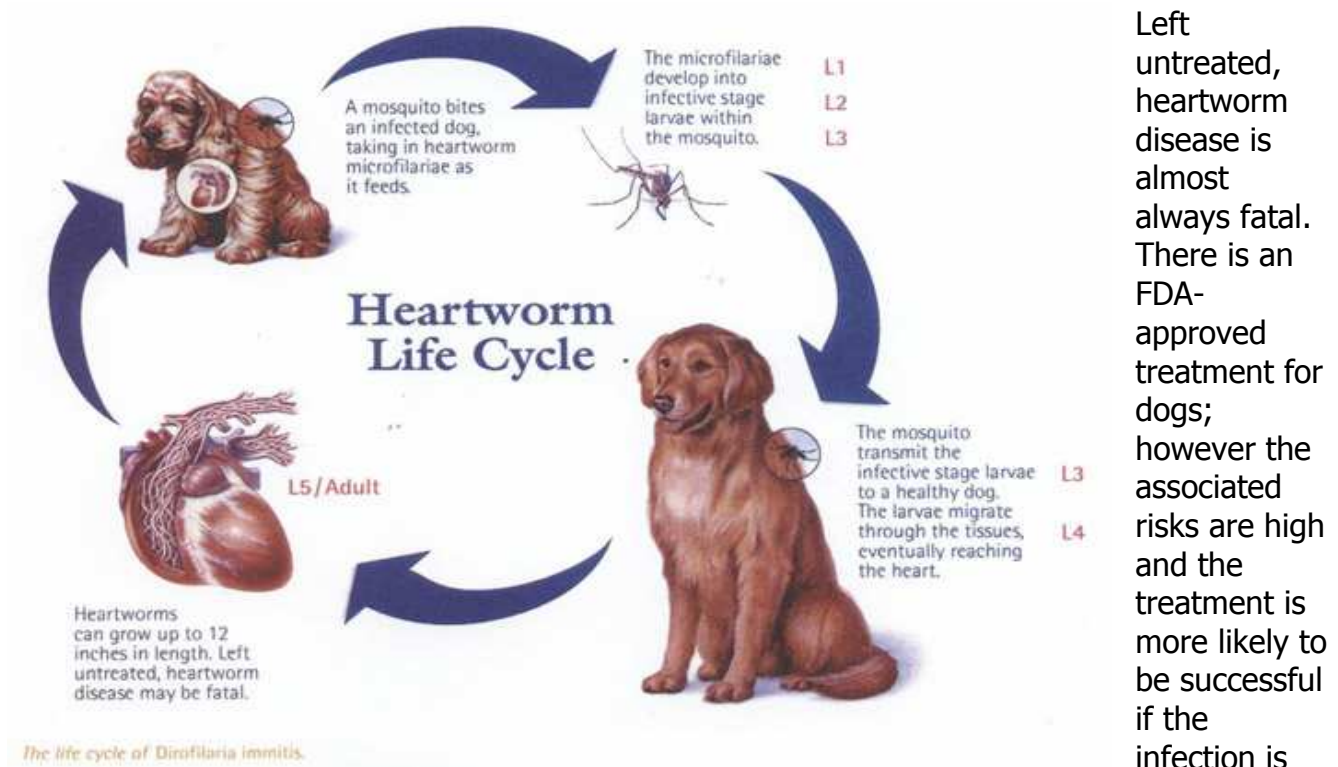
Heartworm: Dogs at Risk

Many people are aware of Heartworm disease, but are unfamiliar with the details of this potentially fatal and completely preventable threat.

Heartworms are parasitic worms that can infect dogs, cats, ferrets and a variety of wild animals. The only method of transmission is by mosquitoes and it has now been documented in all 50 states. Everyone should consider their pets at risk, even if they never go outside.

Mosquitoes become infected when they "bite" an infected host. Young heartworms, called microfilariae, circulate in the blood of their host until a mosquito ingests them. Within the mosquito, they develop into infective larvae and can be transmitted to a new host when they mosquito takes another blood meal. Once they've invaded their new host, the larvae travel through connective tissue, enter the veins and finally settle in the blood vessels of the lungs and heart. There they continue to mature and can reach lengths of 14 inches. As adults, they produce microfilariae, and the cycle continues.

Mature heartworms can inflict severe damage in the heart and lungs of dogs. Sometimes an immune response occurs, which can then damage other organs as well. Symptoms of infection include coughing, exercise intolerance, weight loss and abnormal lung and heart sounds. Once the infection becomes symptomatic, it is labeled heartworm disease.



Left untreated, heartworm disease is almost always fatal. There is an FDA-approved treatment for dogs; however the associated risks are high and the treatment is more likely to be successful if the infection is

detected early.

Prevention is the safest and most economical approach to heartworms. The American Heartworm Society now recommends year-round prevention, even in colder climates. There are many approved preventatives available, and some are also effective against additional parasites.

Please call us to get your dog started on heartworm preventative.