



**Beaconsfield
Veterinary Centre**

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HEARTWORM PREVENTION

What is heartworm?

Heartworm is a serious parasitic infestation that is transmitted by mosquitoes. This disease mainly affects dogs and occasionally cats. When an infected mosquito bites a dog, that dog then becomes the main host of the heartworm. The immature worms then travel via the bloodstream to the heart where they grow, until they gradually clog up the chambers of the dog's heart.

As the disease progresses and the worms continue to grow, the heart stops working efficiently, leading to organ failure, heart disease and eventually death. Heartworm infestation can be very difficult to cure, and even with modern veterinary treatments the outcome can be fatal.

Heartworm is very common in the more tropical areas of Australia, but there are still enough reported cases in Victoria for this disease to be of real concern for dog owners.

How can I tell if my dog has heartworm disease?

In the early stages your dog may show no symptoms, outwardly appearing to be a healthy animal for several years. Eventually the dog will become lethargic, start coughing and may have difficulty breathing. By this stage the dog can deteriorate very quickly and can even be dead within 72 hours.

The only way to know for sure if your dog is a carrier of heartworm is for the vet to take a small amount of blood and have it specially tested. This is not an expensive procedure and is well worth while for piece of mind if your dog has not been on regular heartworm preventatives. If the test comes back negative, then your dog can be placed onto long term heartworm prevention. If the test comes back positive then at least the disease can be treated in its earlier stages with more likelihood of success.

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When should I start my dog on heartworm prevention?

Ideally you should start your puppy on heartworm prevention before 6 months of age. By doing this you can guarantee a lifetime free from heartworm disease.

If your dog is over 6 months of age and has not been taking regular heartworm preventatives, he or she will need to have a blood test taken to detect for an infestation.

Which heartworm preventatives should I choose for my dog?

Many new products have been released in the past few years that are designed to make parasite prevention easier, and more convenient for you. You can choose from:



- Daily tablets
- Monthly chews
- Monthly combination tablets eg, Sentinel & Interceptor
- Monthly spot on combinations eg, Revolution, Advocate
- Yearly injection

The yearly injection is certainly the easiest method of heartworm prevention. It takes all of the stress out of having to remember to give tablets every day or month, and as a result is becoming a popular choice for many clients.

If you have any questions regarding heartworm prevention please contact the clinic at any time and our staff will be happy to advise you on the best product for your dog.

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