

## Heartworm Preventative

First of all, we recommend dogs stay on heartworm preventative year round. Heartworms are transmitted by mosquitoes and it is possible to see mosquitoes in January, if we have a few warm days. Larval (baby) heartworms are transmitted to the dog when it is bitten by an infected mosquito. Heartworm preventatives kill these larval worms before they can grow into adults in the dog's blood. The few extra dollars it costs to keep your dog on preventative over the winter can save your dog's life, not to mention hundreds of dollars worth of treatment, if he ever becomes infected with heartworms.

We test dogs every year as a "double check". Dogs have been known to spit out their heartworm preventatives when the owner isn't looking and, therefore, are not adequately protected against heartworms. Also, if the dog vomits or has diarrhea around the time the preventative was given, we can't be sure how well the medication was absorbed. Each company guarantees their product, so if a dog tests positive and we can prove the dog was on preventative every month, the company will cover the cost of the treatment. Our in House heartworm test also has the added bonus of testing for Lyme disease and Ehrlichiosis (transmitted by ticks, just like Lyme disease). When these disease are caught early, we have better success with treatment. See last month's "ask the doctor" question for more information on Lyme Disease below