



The Autumn Report
Healthy tips for healthy dogs!

Volume 1, Issue 3

Everything you should know about
HEARTWORM PREVENTION

Heartworm questions are very common. In this issue we focus on heartworm prevention and some alternatives to traditional heartworm medications.

Because of the possibility of side effects from heartworm prevention medications, more and more guardians now opt to avoid these drugs. As an alternative, other measures and more frequent testing can be used to prevent heartworm infection and its terrible consequences.

Dogs and cats can be tested more frequently using a combination of the Elisa heartworm test and the DNA heartworm test. The Elisa test is the one commonly used in the spring to screen for heartworm infection. It can detect the presence of microfilariae in the blood.

With this test, heartworm infection can only be detected when adult worms are established in the heart (YIKES!) and producing little worms. With the DNA heartworm test any stage of infection, even a baby heartworm injected by a mosquito yesterday, can be detected. This test is especially useful mid-summer and fall to detect the presence of an "early infection".

Why is it useful to detect an early infection?

Early detection of Heartworm is important because it can be treated before the worms are established in the heart, thus preventive drugs can be avoided. In fact, the same drugs are frequently used for prevention and for infection. So drugs are only used when necessary. Although, the DNA heartworm test can detect the tiniest presence of heartworm at any stage of evolution it does carry a risk of "false negative" results. To avoid this problem at our clinic, we recommend the DNA test be performed mid-summer and late October, and in some cases more frequently. We also use the Elisa screening test in the spring.

Considering the holistic benefits

Like many things holistic, it may seem more complicated than using the preventive drugs and avoiding the problem all together. However, the point is to limit chemicals to the animal's body. "An ounce of prevention", for heartworm, intestinal worms, fleas, viral diseases, bacterial diseases, etc., can easily add up to "a pound of drugs". The evidence is mounting that there is a health cost to pay for such preventive measures, in the form of auto-immune and other chronic diseases.

For clients who choose to avoid heartworm prevention medication, I make the following recommendations:

- Q Limit mosquito exposure

- Q Use a topical essential oil based mosquito repellent (lavender, citronella, etc.)

- Q Vitamin B 1 or Brewer's yeast added to the diet during mosquito season.

- Q I dispense a homeopathic heartworm nosode for administration once a week during mosquito season. (Note: no medications are dispensed without a consultation.)

- Q The Heartworm DNA test mid-summer and fall and monthly in case of high exposure.

- Q The Heartworm Elisa test in the spring.

Stay tuned for more answers to your canine health questions in the next *Autumn Report* coming soon. This letter may be reproduced if referenced.

Please note: It can be important to consult a vet to make sure your dog is healthy before beginning any home made medication or diets. All dogs are different. The purpose of this newsletter is to offer general advice. It is not a substitute for proper veterinary care. The author and Canadian Dog Group Limited are not responsible for the accuracy or implications of any of the recommendations contained in this newsletter.

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Thank you very, very much!