

Heart Worm Prevention

They wouldn't hurt a fly...they're just big 'ol biscuit eaters!

A few days ago I was setting up a time to visit a dear neighbor of mine. She noted it would be best for me to come on round the back door and let myself in. She finished her sentence with a phrase that made me giggle out loud like a young school girl when she said in her charming southern drawl . . . “and don't you worry a thing about big ol' Max and Hilda (her beloved dogs) back there, those two might bark quite loud, but truth be told, they wouldn't hurt a fly . . . they're just big ol' biscuit eaters and I love 'em as much as they love me!”

The relationship between pet owners and their cherished pets can be as strong a bond as ever seen. We, as pet owners, are devoted to our pets just as deeply as we are to any family member, and they in return, throughout the years, provide us with an endless amount of love, affection, joy and comfort. It is because of this wonderful relationship that we strive to provide them with a long life of good health and happiness.

A long life of good health is certainly one of the best gifts we can give our pets. One of the essentials to the good health for our cherished four legged friends is heartworm prevention. The Friends of the Animal Village Board recently learned through a local veterinarian that the essential ingredient, Immiticide, in all heartworm treatments was currently no longer being manufactured by the one and only company in Asia that had done so for many years. In addition, due to FDA regulations, no U.S. company is allowed to manufacture this medication due to that critical ingredient required within these treatments. And although further research in the heartworm treatment shortage showed there is another company that will likely start making it again, the time delay of what could be several months, is one every good pet owner should be aware of and plan for.

Accordingly to the American Heartworm Society (AHS), approximately 1 million cats and dogs in the U.S. are heartworm positive. The disease is transmitted through the bite of mosquitoes carrying the parasite. Left untreated, heartworm infection can lead to severe lung disease, heart failure and organ damage. That's tragic when you think heartworm disease can easily be prevented. It is because heartworm disease is so preventable that the AHS recommends that pet owners take steps now to talk to their veterinarian about how to best protect their pets. Heartworm prevention is safe, easy and inexpensive. There are a variety of options for preventing heartworm infection in both dogs and cats, including daily and monthly tablets and chewables, monthly topical and a six-month injectable product available for dogs only.

FAV and AHS encourage all pet owners to do what is best for your treasured pets by making yourself knowledgeable about the facts of heartworm disease and prevention. According to the AHS website, here are five facts every good pet owner should know:

- 1) Blame the mosquito. Pets don't infect each other; the disease requires a go-between, the mosquito. More than 20 species of mosquitoes are known to spread heartworm and they can carry the infected larvae for miles.
- 2) Your pet can't escape the threat of heartworm disease. Heartworm incidence has been documented in all 50 states. That is why the American Heartworm Society (AHS) guidelines recommend that all U.S. pets be given heartworm preventive on a monthly basis and dogs be tested annually for heartworm.
- 3) Cats get heartworm disease too. It is true that dogs are more susceptible than cats, but cats can become seriously ill from just a few worms. The bottom line: if you live in an area where heartworm disease in dogs is prevalent, your cat should get preventive medication too.
- 4) Pets need more than "fair-weather" prevention. While spring is when many pets are tested for heartworm, AHS recommends that pets be protected from this deadly parasite year-round. And notes that limiting heartworm protection to warm weather months can be a risky proposition for your pets.
- 5) Prevention beats the cure any day! Dogs with heartworm disease can and should be treated, but the cost is significant, treating a dog can cost more than \$1,000 and dogs need careful monitoring and cage confinement for a month or more to do so. While the cost of prevention is a fraction of that cost to you and priceless to the health and happiness of your dear and cherished pet.

For more information on heartworm disease, heartworm prevention or the American Heartworm Society (AHS), visit www.heartwormsociety.org. Becoming an informed and knowledgeable pet owner could make all the difference in the precious life of that favorite family member that greets you every day with a wagging tail and sloppy kiss. And in the mean time, if you happen to come across my new friends, Max and Hilda, don't worry they're actually sweet as can be and just a couple of ol' biscuit eaters!

Article written by FAV Board Member