

## PREVENTING HEARTWORMS HELPS PROTECT YOUR FAMILY

Any pet, no matter how well cared for, can get worms. Spring is the perfect time of year to start a parasite control program. Internal and external parasites become active as the weather warms.

One of the most serious kinds of worms is the heartworm. This is a common and deadly parasite which is carried by mosquitoes. Each year thousands of dogs become permanently debilitated or die from lung, heart or circulatory problems caused by heartworms.

A brief office visit for a blood test for these parasites should be part of your dog's health care program. Usually we blood test in the spring, before the warm weather starts. Then your veterinarian will give you convenient, once a month medication to give to your pet for the rest of the year.

Not only are the once a month medications easy and inexpensive to use, but they protect your pet and your family from intestinal parasites as well. Roundworms and hookworms are common intestinal parasites of dogs which can cause problems for people as well. There are 10,000 cases of animal parasites causing disease in humans each year in the United States. 700 people will suffer visual impairment or blindness as a result. Most of these cases are in children, who may be out barefoot in the yard or toddlers who may put soiled fingers in their mouths. Monthly heartworm medications help prevent these intestinal parasites as well as preventing heartworms.

Your pet is a member of your family and deserves protection from parasites. So does your family. Recognizing the human AND animal health threats that worms cause is the first step. Annual stool and blood testing, and regular deworming for both heartworms and intestinal worms, are the best way to prevent serious disease problems.

While you are at your veterinarian's office for your dog's annual blood testing, be sure to ask about flea control. There are some amazing and wonderful new flea products available through your veterinarian. Fleas bite people as well as pets, they can transmit tapeworms to your dog or cat, and treating your house for fleas exposes you and your family to insecticides. It is safer for your pet, and for people, to prevent fleas before they infest your home.

The health and happiness of family pets affects the health and happiness of human family members, both emotionally and physically. Start your four legged family members on a parasite control program this spring - for better health of your entire household!