



# HEARTWORM DISEASE

## What is heartworm disease?

Heartworm disease is a serious illness that can be **fatal** for pets. It's caused by long worms that live in the heart, lungs, and blood vessels. This can lead to lung problems, heart failure, and damage to other organs. Dogs, cats, and ferrets can get heartworms, and they're common in Guam boonie dogs. All dogs, whether they're inside or outside, are at high risk of getting heartworm disease.



*Healthy Heart*



*Adult Worms*

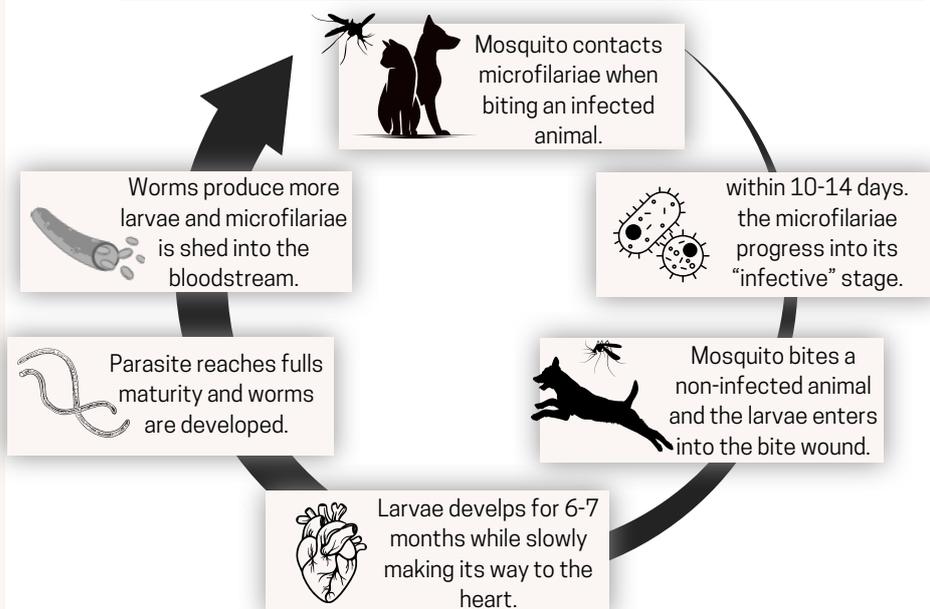


### What can be done to rid my dog of heartworms?

- Your vet will do a thorough check-up and blood tests to see how sick your dog is.
- Treatment involves medication to kill the worms in the heart and lungs.
- Mild cases might need two injections, while severe ones need additional injections along with other meds.
- Your dog will stay in the hospital for treatment and will be closely watched.
- Your vet might also give medication to kill young heartworms in the blood.
- With vet care and modern medicine, your pet has a good chance of getting better.

### What are the signs of heartworm disease?

- Initially, your dog may not show many signs.
- As the worms grow, your pet might seem **tired easily, cough occasionally, or feel weak**.
- In severe cases, heart failure can occur, with potential complications in the liver and kidneys.
- Blood flow to the lungs and other organs may also be affected.



## How is heartworm disease spread?



- Mosquitoes are crucial in the heartworm life cycle.
- Adult female heartworms in infected animals produce baby worms called microfilaria.
- When a mosquito bites an infected animal, it picks up these baby worms.
- The baby worms mature in the mosquito over 10 to 14 days.
- When the infected mosquito bites another animal, it transfers the mature worms.
- Once inside the new host, it takes about 6 months for the worms to grow into adults.
- Adult heartworms can live for years.



## When can my dog get back to normal?

- Rest is important to avoid stress on the heart and lungs.
- Keep your dog calm and indoors for 31 days after treatment. Some very active dogs might need extra confinement or even tranquilizers.
- Always check with your vet before letting your dog return to regular exercise. It's crucial to prevent serious issues, even **death**.

## Are there any problems I should watch out for?

- After treatment to remove heartworms, some dogs might temporarily lose their appetite, have an upset stomach, drool, or pant more than usual.
- They might also show signs of fever, breathing problems, or seem sad due to dead worms.
- **If you notice any of these signs or if your dog starts coughing more, contact your vet right away for proper care.**
- They require strict rest for at least one month following treatment.

## Can my dog get heartworms again?

**Yes**, your dog can get heartworms again if not protected. Mosquitoes spread them easily, and having them once doesn't make your dog immune. When *starting treatment*, your pet needs to start taking a heartworm preventative.

## When should I bring my dog back to the clinic?

- Your vet will schedule a follow-up to make sure your dog is fully recovered.
- **If your dog starts coughing more after treatment, see your vet IMMEDIATELY, as it could mean serious issues.**
- Four months later, your vet will do another test to confirm your dog is free from heartworms.

