

## Heartworm Prevention in Pets

Heartworm prevention is vital to the health and wellbeing of every pet! This dangerous parasite is a small worm that can get inside your pet's heart and cause a variety of health issues and even lead to death. It can affect both dogs and cats as well as ferrets and even some exotic pets. Talking with your pet's veterinarian is an important first step (just give us a call at Livonia Animal Hospital to speak with our veterinary team!), but the real key is practicing routine prevention care every month.

### Prevention Care in Dogs

Monthly medication is key for heartworm prevention in dogs. This can be administered in pill form (both chewable and swallowable are available), though there are also various topical treatments that can prevent infestation from all kinds of parasites and pests.

If a dog is found to have a heartworm infection, there is medication that can treat them. However, it is most effective in the earlier stages, and no dog owner should allow a heartworm infection in their dog to progress as it can be fatal.

### Prevention Care in Cats

Heartworm prevention in cats is actually even more crucial than in dogs, because there is currently no treatment available for them once an infection starts. Detecting a heartworm infection in cats is also rather difficult, especially in the earlier stages, as they often only get a few worms, and it may not show up on antibody blood tests. However, even just a few worms can be lethal due to a cat's smaller heart size. The good news is that, as with dogs, a monthly dose of heartworm prevention medication (pills or topical) will ward off pests as well as prevent heartworms from reaching adulthood.

Now, many pet owners with indoor-only cats wonder if they really need to take steps toward heartworm prevention. The resounding answer to this is "Yes!" All kinds of parasites, including heartworm larvae, can be carried unknowingly indoors by humans who've just been outside, and open windows also provide an opening for unwelcome pests. While your cat may be at less risk if they stay indoors, they are not at no risk. Routine heartworm prevention should be practiced with all pets.

### Prevention Care in Ferrets and Exotic Pets

Just as with cats, heartworm infection can be tough to detect in ferrets and can be highly lethal even in small numbers. They also need once-a-month medication for prevention, even if they are kept indoors 24/7. There are some ferret-specific heartworm prevention medications on the market, and your veterinarian can also make recommendations.

### Learn More About Protecting Your Pet

At Livonia Animal Hospital, we care about keeping all pets protected against heartworm. We invite you to make an appointment with our veterinary team today to learn more about preventing heartworm infections in your pet and keeping them happy and healthy!