

Amherst Animal Hospital

Modern Medicine. Traditional Values.

Canine Heartworm and Intestinal Parasite Prevention

- **What are heartworms?**

Heartworms are very common and potentially deadly internal parasites. Heartworm larvae are transmitted through mosquito bites, and infected dogs can pass the disease along to other animals when they are bitten. Since mosquitoes can easily get indoors, even dogs that do not spend much time outdoors are at risk.

Heartworms can cause heart and lung disease and can be fatal if left untreated. The best way to prevent your pet from getting this disease is monthly heartworm preventative medication.

- **What is a zoonotic disease?**

A zoonotic disease is any disease that can be transmitted directly or indirectly from animals to humans. Some parasites (such as hookworms and roundworms) can be passed directly to humans. Children are especially at risk for acquiring zoonotic parasites. Disposing of pet feces on a regular basis can help remove infective eggs before they can be picked up or ingested by pets or humans. You can reduce your family's risk of parasitic infection by practicing good personal hygiene, including thorough hand washing, especially before eating.

- **What intestinal parasites are risks for my dog?**

- Roundworms – Puppies can get roundworms from their mothers while nursing. Dogs can also get roundworms by eating infected animals (such as rodents or snakes) or from contaminated soil. Roundworms can be passed to children if they ingest roundworm eggs by putting contaminated fingers in their mouths.

- Hookworms – Puppies can get hookworms while in the uterus or while nursing. Dogs can become infected with hookworms by swallowing hookworm eggs or larvae. Hookworms infect humans by penetrating the skin when walking barefoot on contaminated ground. This can cause skin lesions and itching.

- Whipworms – Dogs become infected with whipworms when they ingest whipworm eggs passed from an infected dog or from contaminated soil.

- Tapeworms – Dogs can become infected with tapeworms by ingesting fleas or rodents infected with tapeworms. Tapeworm species that can be harmful to humans are uncommon in the U.S.

- All of these parasites can cause gastrointestinal distress resulting in vomiting and/or diarrhea and weight loss.

- Iverhart, Heartgard, Interceptor and Revolution prevent most of these intestinal parasites.

- **How can I prevent these parasites and diseases?**

The Amherst Animal Hospital recommends year round heartworm and parasite prevention. A single dose of preventative is given once monthly. We recommend annual heartworm testing and fecal examinations to identify internal parasites.

- **What about on-line pet pharmacies?**

We encourage you to purchase your dog's parasite preventatives from our hospital, but we respect your right to choose to obtain them elsewhere. Most of the prescription drugs sold through on-line pet pharmacies are not obtained directly from the manufacturers of these products. Some are routed through veterinarians that resell the products for profit and others are imported from other countries. The pharmaceutical manufacturers of monthly parasite preventatives will not guarantee the safety and effectiveness of products sold through on-line pet pharmacies.

Our hospital values strong relationships with our clients and patients and we are here to help you make the best choice for the health care of your pet. Feel free to ask our staff members if you have questions about heartworm or intestinal parasite prevention.

Our parasite prevention program is provided as part of an ongoing effort to improve our services and support the bond between you and your pet.