



What is heartworm disease in dogs?

Heartworm disease is a potentially deadly illness caused by a parasite called *Dirofilaria immitis*, or heartworms. Adult heartworms in dogs spend their lives in the pulmonary arteries, which can cause permanent damage to the heart, lungs and arteries.

How do dogs get heartworms?

Heartworm microfilariae circulate in an infected dog's blood, infecting mosquitoes that bite the dog. When the mosquito bites another dog, infective larvae are deposited on the skin of the dog, then they migrate into the bite wound.

Once heartworms arrive in the lungs, they cause permanent damage.



Dr. Doug Carithers, Director, Applied Research & Publications, answers common questions about heartworm prevention, heartworm symptoms and treatment.

The Life Cycle of Heartworms in Dogs



Heartworm disease occurs when a mosquito infected with heartworm larvae bites your dog.



After the mosquito feeds, the heartworm larvae find their way into the dog's subcutaneous tissue.

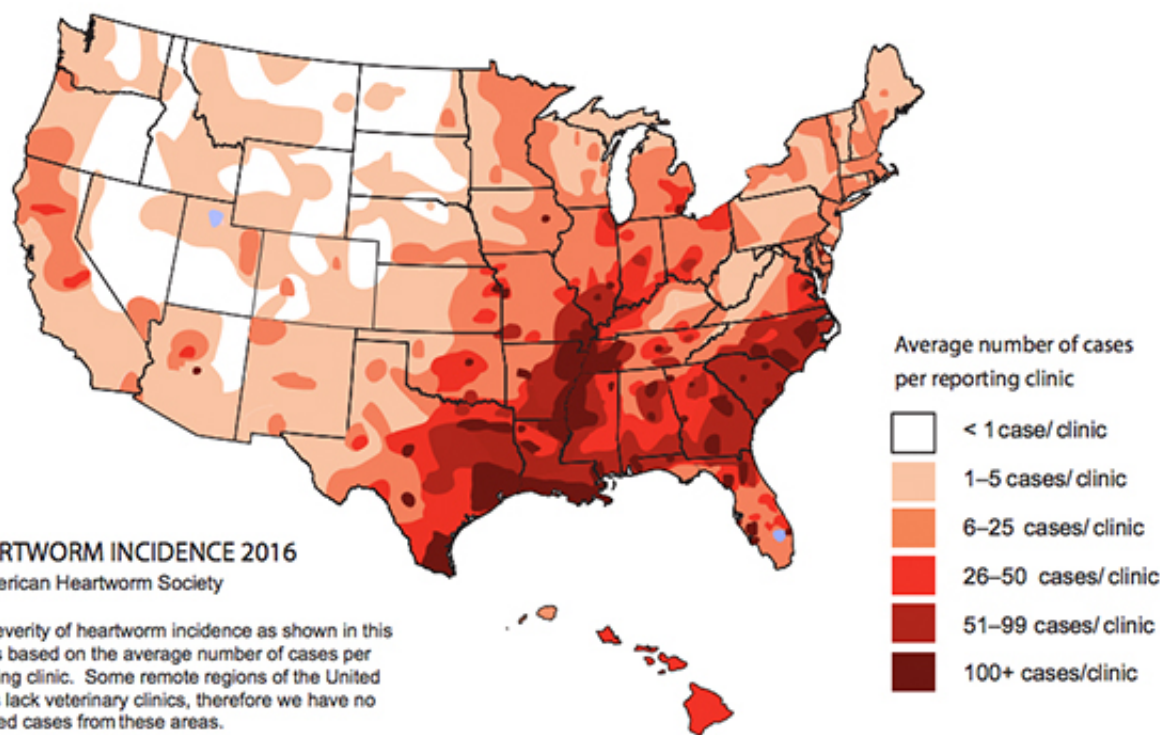


If the larvae are not eliminated, they migrate into the bloodstream and mature into adult heartworms. They cause significant damage to your dog's heart and lungs. Untreated heartworm infections can be fatal.

Is my dog at risk for heartworms?

Yes - All dogs are at risk for heartworm disease.

Mosquitoes and heartworm disease can be found in every state in the United States, regardless of climate, making year-round heartworm prevention vital. To see incidence rates in your area, check the American Heartworm Society's [incidence survey maps](#).



What heartworm symptoms should I look for in my dog?

Heartworm symptoms include coughing, difficulty breathing and lethargy, and even death. More commonly, heartworm disease may show no obvious symptoms, but the damage to the lungs caused by heartworms is permanent.

Ask your veterinarian about year-round heartworm prevention for your pets.

Heartworm prevention - What can I do?


Heartworm disease in dogs can be prevented using preventives such as HEARTGARD® Plus (ivermectin/pyrantel). HEARTGARD Plus takes care of any infection your dog may have picked up in the previous 30 days, and must be given on time, every month to effectively prevent development of heartworm disease.

Learn more about heartworm prevention with [HEARTGARD Plus](#).

Why should I prevent heartworm disease?

It is possible to kill adult heartworms infecting dogs, but it is expensive, difficult and risky. The dying worms will leave your dog with irreparable lung damage. Infection is as fast and simple as a single mosquito bite, administering prevention is the best course of action for all dogs.

DOGS LOVE THE REAL-BEEF CHEWABLE



Learn more about effective heartworm prevention with HEARTGARD Plus. [LEARN MORE](#)

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION: HEARTGARD Plus is well tolerated. All dogs should be tested for heartworm infection before starting a preventive program. Following the use of HEARTGARD Plus, digestive and neurological side effects have rarely been reported. For more information, contact your veterinarian or click here for full prescribing information.