

## PARASITES

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### EXTERNAL PARASITES

**Flea and Ticks** can cause a host of problems for your dog, from flea allergy dermatitis to Lyme disease. In severe cases, fleas and ticks can cause dangerous amounts of blood loss and even death, especially in young animals. For every flea that you see on your pet, there are likely to be hundreds of eggs and larvae in your home and yard. Therefore, a truly effective flea control program always includes treating the environment as well as treating your pet.

Steps for a successful flea control program:

- Remove fleas from the indoor environment.
- Remove fleas from the outdoor environment.
- Remove fleas from pets.
- Keep immature forms of fleas from developing.

Ticks, besides being unsightly and painful, can be very dangerous. These blood sucking insects can transmit diseases – the most common being Lyme disease. Keeping pets out of grasses and woods helps to reduce their exposure to ticks.

There are many combination flea and tick products for pets, including once-a-month topicals, sprays, powders, dips, shampoos, and collars.



### INTERNAL PARASITES

Internal parasites live off of their host, stressing the overall health of your pet. Although a parasite harms a host, it does not usually kill the host or it would eventually run out of a place to live. Often invisible to the naked eye, diagnosis is usually made by fecal or blood tests. Treating and prevention are important as these parasites can be passed on to people.

**Roundworms** Puppies with roundworms may have diarrhea and distended bellies and you may notice what looks like curled spaghetti strands in your dog's stool, but often no visual signs are apparent. Roundworms absorb nutrients in a dog's intestines, interfering with digestion. Most puppies are born with roundworms; dogs can get roundworms from eating an infected rodent or through contact with contaminated feces. Many veterinarians suggest animals be wormed on at least an annual basis. Heartworm preventives such as Heartgard Plus also control roundworms and are an important addition to a roundworm prevention program.

**Hookworms** are very small, thin worms that reside in the small intestine and feed on the animal's blood. Puppies may be born with hookworm infection. A dog contracts hookworms by ingesting larvae through contaminated water or soil, or by eating another infected animal. Larvae can also penetrate the skin. Signs include bloody diarrhea, weight loss, anemia, vomiting and progressive weakness. If left untreated, hookworms can cause death.

**Whipworms** Adult whipworms, although seldom seen in the stool, look like tiny pieces of thread with one end enlarged. They live in the dog's large intestine. Infestations are difficult to diagnose since the whipworms shed comparatively few eggs - even several fecal exams may not reveal the presence of whipworms. If a dog experiences chronic weight loss and passes stool that seems to have a covering of mucous the veterinarian may prescribe a whipworm medication based upon circumstantial evidence.

**Tapeworms** are one of the most common parasites in dogs. They are transmitted by ingesting fleas or wild animals and break off into 1/4-inch sections that can be seen around a pet's tail or in its feces.

**Coccidia**, a protozoan parasite, is very contagious, especially among young puppies. As a puppy ages, he tends to develop a natural immunity to the effects of coccidia. Adult dogs may carry coccidia in the intestines, and shed the cyst in the feces, but experience no ill effects. In severe cases diarrhea, dehydration and other problems related to coccidia can lead to death. A microscopic fecal exam will detect the cysts confirming a diagnosis.

**Giardia** are protozoan parasites that can be ingested through contaminated water, soil and feces. Younger animals are more often affected, showing signs of acute or intermittent diarrhea and weight loss. Giardia prevents proper absorption of nutrients, damages the delicate intestinal lining, and interferes with digestion. Giardia is very difficult to diagnose because the protozoa are so small and are not passed with every stool.

# HEARTWORM

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Canine heartworm disease is a serious and potentially fatal disease caused by parasitic worms living in the arteries of the lungs and in the right side of the heart. Mosquitoes spread the heartworm infection from dog to dog. More common in areas where mosquitoes are prevalent, outdoor dogs constantly exposed to mosquitoes are the most frequent victims. Dogs with heartworm infections may show decreased appetite, loss of weight, and listlessness. Often, the first sign of the disease is a cough. Animals with heartworm disease will start to show lack of endurance during exercise. Severe cases can lead to congestive heart failure. Once infected with heartworms, treatment can be difficult and expensive. The best program for prevention of heartworm infection includes using preventives, performing routine heartworm testing, and reducing exposure to mosquitoes.



## **ANIMART's Heartworm Testing and Prevention Policies**

- Young puppies (under 7 mos old) should be started on monthly heartworm protection as early as 6 to 8 weeks of age and then blood tested 6 months from first dose.
- Older puppies (over 7 mos old) born during the mosquito season (before October), not started on monthly preventative at 6 to 8 weeks, should be blood tested in the spring. Following a negative heartworm test, your pet can be placed on year round or seasonal (April – December) preventative.
- If your dog is on **heartworm prevention year round**, our policy is that you can heartworm test every other year. However, the safest way to be assured of heartworm prevention is to test every year, as is recommended by the American Heartworm Society.
- If your dog is on **seasonal heartworm prevention** (April – December) we recommend testing every spring.

**NOTE:** Heartworm medication is a prescription medication.

For ANIMART to dispense this medication your pet must have one of the following:

- A recent negative test done at ANIMART.
- A prescription from another veterinary clinic.
- A recent negative test elsewhere and a recent visit at our Veterinary Wellness Center.
- Young puppies can be started on the medication without a test but do need to have seen our veterinarian.

**HEARTGARD Plus** comes with the **Plus Guarantee of Satisfaction!** Your satisfaction with HEARTGARD Plus is guaranteed when used as directed by your veterinarian. HEARTGARD Plus is highly effective against heartworms, and treats and controls 2 species of roundworms and 3 species of hookworms. Ask ANIMART for details about the **Plus Guarantee of Satisfaction.**



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