

INFORMATION ON HEARTWORMS IN DOGS

WRITTEN BY MICHELLE WEAVER

I get asked A LOT about heartworms, heartworm preventatives, and heartworm treatments. I hope you find this information helpful. THIS INFO IS FOR YOU TO MAKE INTELLIGENT DECISIONS ON YOUR OWN.

My dogs are not on HW preventative. “Michelle, you’re a terrible pet owner!” If that was your first thought, please stop reading this and unfollow and/or block me, we’re not going to get along.

Dana Scott, founder and CEO of Dogs Naturally Magazine, “Why is the risk of [HW] disease unacceptable while the risk of death and illness from [HW] preventives is widely accepted?”

Giving my dogs HW preventative every month is more dangerous to my dogs than getting HW larvae in their system.

As stated in a Natural Dog article by Sharlene Goodsworth of Canine Holistic Wellness Centre (NOTE: she is not in the US and is not referring to our National Park Service, but it’s definitely a valid point) “If it only takes one bite, then why are local National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) needing to use the 1080 baits in the local national parks to keep control of the fox / wild dog populations? If [HW] disease is so prevalent on the Coast why aren’t the fox / wild dog populations being decimated by [HW]?”

This is a wonderful article with A LOT of FACTUAL information about HW and HW Disease:

<https://www.naturaldog.com.au/HW>

HEARTWORM INFECTION VS HEARTWORM DISEASE

There is a big difference between HW infection and HW disease. HW infection is when there are antigens present in your dog’s bloodstream. HW disease is when your dog is showing symptoms of HWs.

The first step to know if your dog is infected (if they aren’t showing symptoms) is a HW Antigen Test given by your vet. The tests looks for antigens, which are proteins released by the adult female HWs into a dog’s bloodstream. If it is positive your dog has a HW infection. HW disease is when a dog is presenting with symptoms (reluctance to exercise, getting tired quickly with exercise, coughing and sometimes collapsing) and tests positive. Vets very rarely see dogs that are presenting symptoms.

HW disease (where there are mature adult HWs in your dog) takes at least 5-7 months to develop. This is one of the reasons the vet will never test your puppy for HWs...they aren’t old enough for the HWs to have developed yet.

HW preventative all year long in NC is unnecessary. The only states where year-round HW transmission is possible are Florida and south Texas. Microfilariae develop in the mosquito and if the temperature drops below 57-59 degrees F (some info states 57, others 59) the microfilariae is deactivated in the mosquito and it cannot incubate. It has to be above 57-59 degrees F DAY AND NIGHT for the microfilariae to stay alive/activated.

HEARTWORM PREVENTION

Most importantly the “HW Preventative” the vets push you to give your dogs every month are not preventing HWs. They kill HW larvae that is already in your dog from the previous 30 days, IF your dog happened to even get larvae in their system.

Dr. Glen Dupree was a very well respected name in homeopathic veterinary medicine. He stated “I assume my dogs have HWs.” And he treated them accordingly.

My dogs have a healthy immune system and that is the number one way to prevent HW disease. Even if they get HW infection their immune system would be able to keep them from developing HW disease. I mean, I’ll just be honest and tell you, I wouldn’t risk it and do nothing if they got a positive test result. However, this is why coyote, fox, wolves, etc. haven’t become extinct due to HW disease.

In my opinion, the supplements that claim to prevent HWs in your dog are simply supporting your dog’s immune system. I think it’s a wonderful thing to support your dog’s immune system, but those supplements don’t actually prevent HW infections. Here’s a quote from Dana Scott, founder and CEO of Dogs Naturally Magazine, to think about, “So while the dog’s immune system is busy fighting off his last visit to the vet where he got flea and tick powder, vaccines, maybe some antibiotics, and even some nice, processed veterinary food, the microfilariae are free to take over because the defenses are taxed to the limit.” [Dogs Naturally Magazine Natural HW Prevention Without Pills](#)

Using neem oil and cedar oil are great, although not 100% effective...on me or my dogs. [Cedarcide](#) is a great product has a stronger concentration and is cheaper than Wondercide. No, I do not carry it in my store.

Testing is going to be your best defense in preventing your dog from getting HW disease. It’s recommended to get the HW Antigen Test once every 4-5 months. Remember it takes 5-7 months for the larvae to develop into adults. If you are testing before the HWs are able to develop into harmful adult HWs you can give dogs HW meds until they test negative. I actually had a wonderful vet that used to treat my dogs before he retired to tell me that’s the recommendation he would have if one of my dogs were to test positive.

[HW INFECTION AND HW DISEASE TREATMENT](#)

“Michelle! My dog tested positive for the antigens! Do I have to spend \$1000 and keep them still for a month to treat them?!”

No! As I’ve already stated, if your dog tests positive while you are having them tested every 4-5 months you can then start them on the HW “preventative” and give it to them every month until they test negative. Another alternative is to contact a homeopathic vet and get a homeopathic treatment that will get rid of them no matter what stage they are. When I was doing Great Dane Rescue full time we got in an old great dane with A LOT of health problems. He had HW disease and the vet suggested the conventional treatment option. We did not think he was strong enough to survive the conventional treatment. We used a combination of several homeopathic remedies and he tested negative after 6 months. I will not tell you what ingredients we used due to liability reasons, but I am here to tell you I know it works because I experienced it firsthand.

There aren’t many holistic vets near us. The Medicine Man in Morganton will use homeopathy sometimes, but he does not identify as a homeopathic vet. Charlotte Natural Animal Clinic, Caring Holistic Services in Kings Mountain, and Whole Pet Veterinary in Davidson are a few of the offices that show up on my Google search. I only have personal experience with Whole Pet Veterinary in Davidson.

Here’s a great article about the life cycle of HWs: [Dogs Naturally Magazine Natural HW Prevention Without Pills](#)