

## Heartworm Disease: Prevention is less risky than Treatment

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**You will do almost anything to ensure your pet does not become ill. Particularly when it is something as easy to prevent as heartworm disease.**

Although heartworm disease is treatable, it may result in serious complications. Treatment can be painful as well as expensive depending on how extensive the diagnostic tests are, the stage of heartworm disease, the age of the pet, and other factors. No matter what it costs in dollars, the cost is even greater to the long-term health of your pet.

If your pet contracts heartworm disease, your veterinarian must proceed with treatment very carefully. Treatment includes using an adulticide and a microfilaricide for circulating immature heartworms called microfilariae. The earlier the disease is treated, the less chance for irreparable damage to occur to the heart and other organs.

### DRUGS USED

**Adulticide** - The adulticide of choice, and the one approved by the FDA, is Immiticide (melarsomine dihydrochloride), a compound derived from arsenic. Immiticide is given by injection, deep in the muscles along the spine. The treatment can have adverse effects as the worms die and can potentially obstruct blood vessels in the lungs. Because of this risk, any dog being treated with an adulticide must be kept very quiet during treatment and for a minimum of several weeks afterwards. The treatment will kill the adult worms, but the damage already done to the heart and lungs will remain. In severe cases, the worms may need to be surgically removed from the heart.

**Eradicating microfilariae** - One of the monthly heartworm preventives, Advantage Multi, recently received FDA approval as a microfilaricide as well. This means that Advantage Multi not only prevents heartworm disease, but it also treats circulating microfilariae.

As you can see, treatment for heartworm disease is a complicated and expensive process, and it may take months for infected animals to recover. Some pets may have permanent damage to the heart. By investing in a [preventive medication](#), you will spare your pet from this deadly disease and its complicated and costly treatment.