

Northwood Animal Hospital

Heartworm Treatment Protocol

Your pet has been diagnosed with canine heartworm disease. This is a treatable condition and the earlier treatment is begun, the less likely there will be permanent damage to the heart, lungs, kidneys, and liver, all of which are affected by heartworm infection. *Signs of heartworm disease include coughing, weight loss, and lethargy* but most dogs have no obvious signs at all.

Before treatment begins, your pet will receive a complete physical exam and be started on ivermectin (a heartworm preventative). We also recommend screening bloodwork and/or chest radiographs (x-rays). These tests help verify that your pet is healthy enough to undergo heartworm treatment and help us to predict any problems that may be encountered during treatment.

All dogs undergoing heartworm treatment must be current on vaccines per hospital boarding requirements (distemper/parvo, bordatella and rabies).

Treatment Protocol:

Heartworm treatment is comprised of a 10 week treatment course with check-ups every two weeks. It is **VERY IMPORTANT** that your dog be confined to leash walks and cage rest during this time. Below are the details of each visit.

Week 0: Your pet needs to be dropped off in the morning prior to 9 am. He/she will then receive an Immiticide injection to kill adult heartworms and an oral medication to kill any larval stages of heartworms (if this wasn't done when your pet was diagnosed with heartworms). Your dog will stay with us in the hospital for monitoring and will be able to go home after 4 pm. *When your pet gets home activity restriction is of the utmost importance. Excitement and/or increased activity can cause severe complications up to, and including, death. Expect some discomfort in your dog's lower back area (the site of injection). If swelling or pain is pronounced, let us know so we can dispense appropriate pain medications. Observe closely for coughing or other respiratory signs, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, or lethargy. Please call if any of these signs develop and a doctor will advise if your pet needs to be seen prior to the scheduled follow-up visit.*

Week 2: Two weeks after the first treatment, your dog will return for a progress exam. A physical exam is performed with special attention paid to the heart and lungs. *This visit does not require that your pet stay in the hospital.*

Week 4: Two weeks later, your pet will return for the second part of treatment. This includes one Immiticide injection on the day of his/her arrival, an overnight stay for observation, and a second Immiticide injection on the following day. Your pet will be able to go home after 4 pm on the second day. *Your pet must still remain under strict exercise restriction.*

Week 6: Two weeks after the first treatment, your dog will return for another progress exam. A physical exam is performed with special attention paid to the heart and lungs. *This visit does not require that your pet stay in the hospital.*

Week 8-10: It is very important to slowly return your pet to his/her normal activity level. There is still inflammation in the heart and lungs that can cause respiratory problems and clots in the lungs up to 6 weeks after the last Immiticide injection. *Please still remain vigilant for any signs of respiratory distress, vomiting, diarrhea or lethargy.*

Your pet should be started on monthly heartworm prevention which should be continued throughout the rest of his/her life. Your pet will need to **return in 6 months** for a heartworm test to verify success of the treatment course.

Please call if you have any questions or concerns about your pet during heartworm treatment.

Emergency care is available 24 hours.

(850) 385-8181 or (850) 385-PETS

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