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# paw PRINTS

“Putting Pets & People First”

SPRING EDITION

## SPRING IS HERE!

After a long hard winter, spring has finally sprung. But along with budding trees, grass and flowers popping up all over, pet owners need to remember that there are other, not so pleasant things to keep in mind for their pets.

There are many types of internal and external parasites that make their yearly debut in spring. From fleas to heartworm to roundworms, all parasites are harmful to your pet. But the good news is that they are not only treatable, but preventable.

Dogs and cats age up to seven times faster than humans. That means major health changes can occur in a short amount of time. Taking your pet to the veterinarian once a year is equivalent to you seeing a doctor or dentist only once every seven years!

If you consider your pet's healthcare to be just as important as your own – and research shows nearly 70 percent of pet owners do – then take a few minutes right now to see how old your pet is in “people” years. If your best

friend is “middle age” or older, and hasn't had a wellness exam in at least six months, please contact your veterinarian today.

Do you know how to reduce the risks? It's not easy keeping our pets healthy. After all, dogs and cats are frequently exposed to organisms that can cause disease or illnesses. Even pets that never go outdoors are at risk.

Annual or semi-annual visits to your veterinarian for wellness testing and parasite prevention is the best way to reduce these risks to your pets.

## WHAT IS HEARTWORM?

Heartworm can result in serious disease and even death for dogs or cats. You may not know that your pet has contracted heartworm disease because the disease progresses very slowly with few, if any, symptoms at first. A heartworm-infected dog may die from respiratory system failure before you even realize the animal is sick.

Heartworm larvae enter a dog or cat through a mosquito bite wound and then migrate to the large arteries near the heart. Heartworms grow and mature in the blood vessels that lead from the heart to the lungs. Without treatment, heartworms can eventually interfere with proper blood flow and prevent the heart and lungs from working properly.

Occasionally, heart-

worm larvae migrate to unusual sites such as the brain, eye or other parts of the body. This migration can result in unusual and deadly symptoms—blindness, seizures, organ damage and lameness.

### Early Symptoms

Some early signs of heartworm infection may include a cough or exercise intolerance. The dog may show unusual signs of exhaustion. In advanced cases, dogs may experience weight loss, weakness, a loss of appetite and/or congestive heart failure.

### Protection is easy

Heartworm infection is spread from one animal to another through mosquito bites.

While it may be impossible to prevent bites, there are products available to make sure that your pet does not develop heartworm, even after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Advantage Multi is a topical product prescribed by your veterinarian and provides protection from heartworm, roundworms, hookworm, fleas and ear mites. Sentinel is an oral product that also protects against heartworm, roundworm, hookworm and fleas.

Your pets look up to you. Your pets need you to provide the care they need. Talk to your veterinary professional today.

## WELLNESS TESTING... Why is it so important?



“Always turn and look when your cat gazes behind you with that intent look in her eyes. Someday, there might actually be something there.”

### What is wellness testing?

Wellness testing is a blood test that checks your pet for common ailments and diseases that can develop in any pet, regardless of age, breed or species.

### Why do wellness testing?

Pets can't tell us how they are feeling, and as a result disease may be present before you are aware of it. If a disease can be detected before any symptoms are seen, we can take steps to correct the problem before irreparable damage is done.

### When is wellness testing done?

Wellness testing is usually done once yearly, and many pet owners combine wellness testing with heartworm testing or yearly vaccines.

## What's Involved in Wellness Testing?

There are four main categories of wellness testing:

### CBC:

This test analyses the various cells in the blood stream. These include red blood cells, which carry oxygen to the tissues, white blood cells, which fight infection and respond to inflammation, and platelets, which help the blood to clot.

### Biochemistry Profile:

This test provides information about how well the various organs of the body are working, helps to detect the presence of some metabolic diseases like diabetes, and assesses the liver, kidneys and pancreas.

### Urinalysis:

A urinalysis provides information about how well the kidneys are working, identifies the presence of inflammation or infection, and can detect metabolic diseases such as diabetes.

### Thyroid Testing:

This test checks the thyroid for “hypothyroidism”, a common thyroid disease in the dog which occurs when the thyroid doesn't produce enough of the thyroid hormone. “Hyperthyroidism” more commonly afflicts cats, and occurs when the thyroid is producing too much of the thyroid hormone.



## The BIG BAD Flea



Fleas are familiar pests; few pet owners escape the trials of ridding their pet of this common parasite. However, fleas can be eradicated more easily today than ever before. For example, advanced flea control products available through veterinarians require only a single monthly dose to achieve reliable flea control for the pet.

Fleas can infest dogs and cats of all ages, sexes and breeds. Animals that spend a lot of time outside are at in-

creased risk of getting fleas, but those that stay indoors are still at risk.



Animals may also react to flea saliva and develop an extremely uncomfortable skin disease. This is usually treatable with antibiotics and flea medication.

Fleas can infect animals with tapeworms, an intestinal parasite, if infected fleas are ingested. Fleas act as intermediate hosts for tapeworms, allowing the tapeworm eggs to mature until they are ready to be passed along to an unsuspecting animal.

## INCIDENCE OF HEARTWORM IN CANADA RISING

Numbers of heartworm positive cases in Canada are rising quickly each year. A recent poll showed more than 600 positive cases in Canada, most in Ontario, with many more not reported due to in-house testing.

Studies show that 75% of dogs in North America have never been tested for, or been put on a monthly heartworm prevention medication in their lives. So the vast majority of dogs out there are of unknown infective status, and

represent a reservoir of infection. These studies surely underestimate the real number of infected dogs.

Heartworm disease has been diagnosed in foxes, wolves, coyotes and raccoons. These animals are thus a permanent source of infection for our domestic dogs, since no preventative medication or treatment for the disease is given to the local wildlife. Although rare, the disease has even been reported in the domestic cat.

The changing climate may also be a cause for the rising numbers of heartworm positive cases. Because warming weather patterns and increasing rainfall are both predicted to accelerate with global warming, the changing climate will likely then exacerbate mosquito breeding and therefore positive heartworm cases.



### Why Test My Dog Annually?

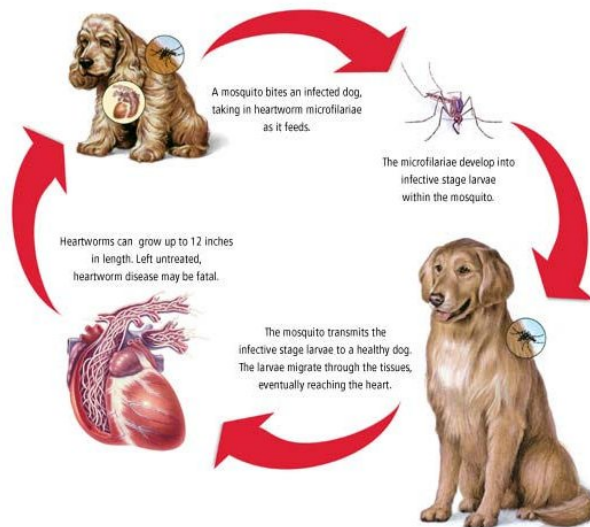
Approximately 10% of heartworm positive dogs in Ontario were taking heartworm prevention when they contracted heartworm.

Most failures could be traced back to owners forgetting to give the medication or not giving it correctly, or even the dog not taking it properly.

No medication is foolproof.

If your dog does test positive, the earlier a heartworm infection is detected and treated the less damage is done to your dog's heart. If a heartworm preventative medication is given to a dog already infected with heartworm, a severe allergic reaction may occur.

For these reasons, the heartworm preventative medication is a prescription product and the manufacturers require veterinarians to test yearly.



### My Dog is Always Indoors... Why does he Need Heartworm Protection?

Heartworm is spread by mosquitoes, and mosquitoes are so tiny that they can easily get into your house, through open doors, windows, or even small tears in your screens. They can hitchhike in on your clothes, or sneak through the doorway when you open the door. It only takes one infective mosquito to put your dog's life in jeopardy.

Mosquitoes are a part of life in Ontario. It is important to protect your dog from this life-threatening parasite, regardless of whether he spends most of his time indoors or out.

"If your dog thinks you're the greatest person in the world, don't get a second opinion."

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“Never feed your  
cat anything that  
clashes with the  
carpet.”

## PROTECT YOUR PET AND YOUR FAMILY FROM PARASITES

Internal parasites live in the stomach, intestines and other internal organs of your pet. They can pose a threat to the health of your pet and your family!

A zoonotic disease is an infectious disease which can be passed between species from pets to people. Roundworm and hookworm are two common zoonotic parasitic diseases. Most zoonotic parasites can be spread to humans through contact with an infected pet. Children are most at risk. Illness is caused in humans when the parasite causes damage to the skin, eye, brain, lungs and liver. Parasites can also cause diarrhea in people.

Parasites aren't usually visible, and your pet may appear healthy. Because of the fact that some pets do not show signs of a parasite burden, all pets should have a stool sample checked at least once a year at their veterinary clinic to make sure no parasites are present.

Prevention and treatment is easy. A once a month treatment can protect your pet from intestinal parasites, fleas and heartworm.

### What is the Best Way to Prevent Zoonotic Disease?

- Clean up feces found in your yard promptly.
- Wear gloves when handling animal feces.
- Wear gloves when gardening.
- Wash your hands frequently and make sure your children do the same.
- Never handle food or drink without washing your hands first.
- Cover children's sandboxes so that neighborhood cats cannot use them as a litter box.
- Do not allow your pet to eat raw meat.
- Avoid allowing pets to lick or kiss your face.
- Have your pet's feces analyzed for parasites regularly.
- Make certain all pets are receiving monthly preventive medication for fleas and intestinal parasites and heartworm.

### Interesting Facts...

- The flea can jump 350 times its body length, that is like a human jumping the length of a football field.
- A cat uses its whiskers to determine if a space is too small to squeeze through.
- A dog can locate a the source of a sound in 1/600 of a second and can hear sounds 4 times farther away than humans can.
- Fleas have changed history. More human deaths have been attributed to fleas than all the wars ever fought. As carriers of the bubonic plague, fleas were responsible for killing one-third of the population of Europe in the 14th century.
- Cats step with both left legs, then both right legs when they walk or run. The only other animals to do this are the giraffe and the camel.
- The common belief that dogs are color blind is false. Dogs can see color but it is not as vivid a color schemes as we see. It is much like our vision at twilight.
- Female fleas consume 15 times their weight daily.
- A cat has 32 muscles in each ear.
- Dogs have lived with humans for over 14000 years. Cats have lived with humans for only 7000 years.
- Dogs on average can run about 19mph. Greyhounds are the fastest dogs on earth and can run at speeds up to 45mph. House cats can run about 30mph.