



## HEARTWORM PREVENTION RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUARANTEE

### Merial™ Guarantee

- Dog must be on Heartgard™ for nine months out of the year (start Apr 1, use through Dec 1)
- Alternatively, dog can be on year-round preventative and test every other year
- Heartgard™ MUST be purchased from a veterinary clinic, not through an outside pharmacy
- If dog contracts heartworm disease, Merial will pay for Immiticide and part of hospital costs (usually \$600-700). Client still accountable for some costs of care.

The makers of our heartworm preventative, Heartgard™, recently updated the guarantee that comes with their product. Merial™ has always had an attached guarantee where the company assists in payment for treatment should the dog somehow become infected. The terms of this agreement have changed, which has required that we at Grand Avenue Veterinary Clinic update our heartworm prevention recommendations.

Merial™ now requires that, in order to get the guarantee, dogs be on heartworm prevention for nine months

out of the year. Traditionally at GAVC we have recommended seven months of treatment, May 1 through November 1. With this change, we are altering our recommendations to April 1 through December 1.

Other components of the guarantee are as before. This means the Heart-



gard™ must be purchased from a veterinary clinic. We do not require that you purchase your preventative

from GAVC (though a yearly test is required if you choose to go elsewhere), but if you do opt to buy through an outside pharmacy, Merial™'s guarantee is rendered invalid.

While diagnosis of heartworm disease remains (fortunately) rare in the Twin Ports, the cost of treatment is around \$700-800. We feel that purchasing Heartgard™ through our clinic provides a significant insurance policy for your dog and recommend following the guarantee's requirements to prevent the expense of a very significant medical cost.

## Does My Dog Need Year-Round Protection?

Heartworm disease is transmitted by mosquitos, and as a resident of an area where winters run from early November through much of March, it's a fair question: when does my dog really need to be on preventative?

Traditionally, GAVC has recommended using preventative May 1 through November 1 (see above for new recommendations). The preventative kills larvae that have entered the dog through mosquito bites during the prior 30

days, so this schedule provided protection from April 1 through November 1.

The American Heartworm Society recommends year-round prevention for all pets. This recommendation is out of the belief that stray mosquitoes could survive indoors for a brief time and transmit the disease even in winter. Also, Heartgard™ has dewormer in it for intestinal parasites, providing added benefit of helping keep these populations low should the dog be repeatedly infected

from environmental parasite exposure.

Common sense dictates that dogs in Minnesota don't need to worry about mosquitoes in January, and if your dog is not being exposed to fecal material from other dogs, the risk of intestinal parasite exposure is probably low. GAVC recently switch to a recommended nine-month protocol (see above).

If you travel to warm-weather states during the winter with your dog, we do

recommend using preventative. Intestinal parasite exposure is also much more common in southern states. Year-round use has it merits, but on a dog-by-dog basis.

If using year-round preventative, we recommend a heartworm test for those animals every other year. However, this is only recommended if we can document the purchase and use of preventative for 24 consecutive months. If a month is missed, we will ask that a test be performed in that year.