

# Pawsitive Press

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[A Video on Heartworm Disease in Cats](#)



[A Video on Heartworm Disease in Dogs](#)

## Heartworm Prevention

Wade Matthews, DVM



One of the advantages of living in Florida is our availability to warm weather. When our friends are digging their driveways out from under two feet of snow, we are deciding if we need a long sleeve or short sleeve shirt. Mosquitoes have learned this information over the years and they aren't leaving anytime soon. They are the carrier of the infective stage of *Difilaria immitis*, which causes heartworm disease. This is a major problem for dogs and cats (more on them later) in Florida; luckily for them it is easily prevented.

### **How do I stop my pets from getting heartworm disease?**

There are numerous medications available that protect pets from heartworm disease. There are topical and oral medications that are given monthly. Some have another product in them that will protect against fleas. Usually these products cost

around six to eight dollars a month and are very effective.

### **Why do I need to have my dog tested for heartworm disease yearly when she is already on heartworm prevention?**

No medication is 100% effective and there are no clinical signs when a dog first gets heartworm disease. It is important to treat heartworm disease early. The airways of the lungs will undergo a change called pulmonary hypertension which is irreversible. The sooner you treat the disease the sooner it will stop its progression.

### **My pet has heartworm disease. What are her treatment options?**

There is only one treatment that is recommended by the American Heartworm Disease Association. Your pet needs to have

radiographs done of the chest to evaluate the condition of the lungs and a lab work evaluation to assess their capability of doing well with therapy. The treatment involves two to three injections of an arsenic compound, depending on what your veterinarian deems appropriate. Another treatment that is discussed is the "slow kill" method. This option is not recommended by many cardiologists due to the unreliability of treatment and the pulmonary hypertension that develops.

### **Should my cat be on heartworm medication?**

Cats are not the normal host for this parasite, so it is harder for them to get it. Cats' lungs however are very sensitive to the parasite and there is a syndrome of acute death associated with it. The University of Florida school of Veterinary Medicine did a study to find that 5% of tested cats were positive for

## Heartworm Continued

heartworms. This is a high enough percentage to warrant that all cats be on prevention. Inside cats are less likely to get the disease, but I have diagnosed inside cats with heartworm disease. The newer medications are topical for cats, making them much easier to treat, and most of them have flea prevention in them.

In summary, heartworm disease is very common in Florida and the prevention is reasonably priced and easy to use. The treatment for the disease is rough on pets and expensive for you. All dogs and cats in Florida would benefit from being on heartworm prevention.



[www.knowheartworms.org](http://www.knowheartworms.org)

## "Dezi's" Saga

"Dezi" was somewhat of a myth around Port Richey. She had been seen running the streets for over three years by the time Jill Smith of All Dog Rescue of Florida heard about her. This adventurous, petite dachshund could find her way in and out of trouble with great ease and was good at it too! After a few years on the streets, a less than savory group of individuals took her in, but it was not an ideal situation for the pint-sized traveler. Eventually, a neighbor noticed the trouble she was in, and after some bargaining, convinced the group to let her go. Though her new home would provide her with much needed veterinary care, it lacked real puppy love and was short lived. A few years after her second rescue, "Dezi" was abandoned again. That is when All Dog Rescue stepped in and *REALLY* saved her. Though she had been to the veterinarian with her previous owner and tested negative for heartworm disease in 2008, she was never placed on heartworm prevention. In November of 2012, "Dezi" was brought to the Animal Hospital of Dunedin, where she had a full medical work-up, including a heartworm test. This time she tested positive for the disease. Treatment was started immediately to save the little trooper and after months of treatment, she has made a full recovery. The next step in her medical make-over was to take care of "Dezi's" severe dental disease. In February, "Dezi" underwent oral surgery with a whopping 12 extractions! Now with a pretty smile and an even stronger heart, "Dezi" is looking forward to her new **furever** family, who will be picking her up from All Dog Rescue of Florida on March 4th! Good Luck "Dezi"!



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