

HEARTWORM

Heartworms are parasitic worms that live in the heart and are transmitted from animal to animal by mosquitoes. It is a fatal disease if left untreated. The main season for heartworms in Colorado is May through October when mosquitoes are most prevalent.

Heartworms can cause coughing, exercise intolerance, labored breathing, and heart failure. Animals with mild infections may show no signs at all.

Heartworm disease is diagnosed with a blood test, also heart and lung changes can be seen on an X-ray.

Treatment for heartworm disease is expensive and has many side effects associated with it, including death. Pets must be hospitalized and monitored very closely.

The best treatment is prevention. There are many kinds of heartworm preventatives on the market. It is typically a once-a-month chewable tablet. Animals must be tested to ensure that they are negative for heartworm prior to starting on the preventative. Blood tests are required yearly even if animals are on a year around course to ensure they remain negative. In Colorado, we suggest that animals be on heartworm preventative May through October. If you travel out of the Colorado area, your animal should be on it year round depending on the mosquito prevalence.

This time of year also brings out fleas and ticks. These little creatures can carry disease and be very uncomfortable to your pet. Prairie dogs are hosts to fleas. They can carry bubonic plague, which could be transmitted home to you. We carry Frontline Plus to help protect you and your pet, talk to your veterinarian.

ALLERGIES

Allergy season is almost upon us. Dogs and cats can be allergic to anything in their environment from pollens and molds to something in their food. Allergies can pop up at any time. Signs that your dog or cat may suffer from allergies include discharge from their eyes, sneezing, scratching, licking their paws, reverse sneezing, and skin lesions. Signs of allergies can imitate other skin diseases such as fungal, bacterial, yeast, autoimmune or immune-mediated diseases. We must see your animal to differentiate among these by doing several skin tests.

There are several treatment modalities that we can use to alleviate the discomfort of allergies. Treatment may include antihistamines, shampoos, diet changes, fatty acid supplements, and allergy skin testing and injections.