



### Protect your pet from heartworms

Spread by mosquitoes, these parasites threaten your pet's health. Effective prevention exists! Our team is here to advise you and perform the necessary tests.

## Disease and Transmission

Heartworm disease, also known as dirofilariasis, is an illness transmitted through mosquito bites. A mosquito becomes infected by biting an infected animal, ingesting microfilariae—tiny, immature worms found in the blood of the infected animal.

The infected mosquito then transmits larvae to your dog through biting or contact. Following a bite, the microfilariae transform into infectious larvae, which migrate to your dog's heart and ultimately develop into adult worms. Did you know that adult worms can measure an average of 30 cm in length? Infectious larvae can also settle on a dog's skin and infect it through contact, without a mosquito bite, finding their way to the heart.

## Clinical Signs

Some dogs infected with a low quantity of worms may not show clinical signs.

Typically, several years pass before visible signs of the disease appear. The most common symptoms of heartworm disease include coughing, difficulty breathing, fatigue, and/or weight loss. Dirofilariasis can lead to severe consequences such as **heart failure, liver failure, kidney failure, and sometimes sudden death.**

The disease is challenging to treat, and the treatment is lengthy, risky, and expensive.

## Prevention

**As the saying goes, prevention is better than cure.** To achieve this, a monthly medication aiming to kill young infectious larvae before they become adults is recommended.

These medications are easy to administer and are usually given from June to November inclusive. The medication also helps control and eliminate various other external and intestinal parasites.

## Diagnosis

It takes at least six months after a bite from an infected mosquito to detect microfilariae in the blood of an infested dog. Therefore, screening tests are recommended from mid-April onwards.

The test used at Jean-Talon and DeLorimier-Rosemont clinics is the Difil test, which detects microfilariae in the blood. Another test, the snap 4Dx, also used to detect tick-borne diseases, can be performed from mid-May. Both tests require a blood sample.

If the chosen test is positive, further tests will be recommended (chest radiographs, blood tests, cardiac ultrasound, or others) to determine the severity of the infection and establish the ideal treatment plan.

Have a question? Contact us!

Or learn more by visiting [www.cvetmontreal.ca](http://www.cvetmontreal.ca)



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