



Association of Shelter Veterinarians

Heartworm Disease Management

Last reviewed: January 2015

The ASV supports the application of the American Heartworm Society guidelines for the prevention, diagnosis, and management of canine and feline heartworms in animal shelters.^{1,2} Regardless of geographic location, sheltering organizations are urged to maintain all dogs and cats on monthly heartworm preventive medications year-round in order to protect individual animal health and welfare and limit disease transmission within the community.

The ASV encourages shelters to perform screening tests on all dogs in order to identify infected dogs and institute therapy to reduce pathology and infective potential. Alternatives to maintenance of infected dogs within the shelter population, such as foster care and transfer to partnering agencies, should be considered when possible.

Organizations choosing to treat and/or adopt infected dogs should ensure that:

- their resources and mission allow for the humane care of exercise restricted dogs with extended lengths of stay,
- shelter staff, volunteers, and potential adopters are educated on the importance of adhering to each component of the management protocol, and
- potential adopters are encouraged to consult with their veterinarian for further guidance.

References

1. American Heartworm Society. Current Canine Guidelines for the Prevention, Diagnosis, and Management of Heartworm Infection in Dogs. Revised 2014. Available online at: <https://heartwormsociety.org/images/pdf/2014-AHS-Canine-Guidelines.pdf>
2. American Heartworm Society. Current Feline Guidelines for the Prevention, Diagnosis, and Management of Heartworm Infection in Cats. Revised 2014. Available online at: <https://heartwormsociety.org/images/pdf/2014-AHS-Feline-Guidelines.pdf>