

Greetings Foster!

You are receiving this because your foster has tested positive for Heartworm Disease.

What is Heartworm?

HEARTWORM IS NOT CONTAGIOUS! Heartworm is carried by mosquitoes and deposited into the animal's skin when they are bitten by an infected mosquito. If you give your pet monthly heartworm preventatives consistently each and every month, such as heartgard, the worm larvae are killed, and your pet will never have to go through heartworm treatment!

If heartworm preventatives are not given, the heartworm larva enter the bloodstream making their way to the heart and eventually grow into large spaghetti noodle looking worms that clog the heart, and if undetected or untreated, this will almost always lead to death. These worms building up in the heart can cause coughing and difficulty breathing, and cause your pet to be less active than usual.

Once an animal has been treated for heartworm however, the worms begin to die and the body simply absorbs them. The activity restriction is to avoid large clumps of dying or dead worms from dislodging and clogging an artery, potentially causing death. Your animal should make a full recovery once treated, leaving no trace of the disease behind. You may even find them to be a bit livelier!

On rare occasions, a treated animal can remain positive at their 9 month retest, and should be retested again a few months later for confirmation, but if they continue to remain positive, they will need to be fully re-treated. If this is the case, albeit very rare, we will certainly discuss re-treatment with adopters, and assist the re-treatment (using one of our partner clinics).

Treatment

1. Once diagnosed, he/she will begin Doxycycline(antibiotic) for 30 days.
2. After 30 days of the Doxycycline he/she will go to our partner clinic, Granite City Pet Hospital (in St. Cloud) to receive an immiticide injection and will stay the day for monitoring.
3. 1 month later he/she will go back for an overnight stay for 2 more immiticide injections, given 1 day apart.
4. Then the final 8 weeks of activity restrictions begin.
5. Adoptions can take place 2 weeks after the last injection.
6. 9 months after their last injection a heartworm test is repeated to check for a positive or negative status.
7. He/she will need to receive a monthly heartworm preventative (Ivermectin) to be given every month, during and after treatment, and continuing for life beyond his/her final Immiticide/Diroban injection (this comes in several forms: oral liquid, chewable, or a tablet). We supply you 9 months worth of this monthly preventative. It is the adopter's responsibility to ensure they get this monthly going forward.

The following information will explain the restricted activity needs for pets undergoing heartworm treatment:

- This activity restriction begins now, and will continue for 8 weeks past their last injection, and then he/she can resume most normal activity.
- Very short walks to potty only.
- No running or jumping.
- Try to limit the use of stairs when not needed.
- No excitement or anything that causes his/her heart rate to rise for prolonged periods of time. This is a very important part of caring for a heartworm dog!
- You will want to find ways to mentally stimulate them as much as possible, to avoid acting out from being too cooped up.
- This activity restriction can be the most difficult part for many people, and dogs too, but that is where a crate comes in handy. Once the animals know each other and the new pup has settled in, the crate may or may not be needed depending on their activity level. Please do not feel guilty about crating, it is for the benefit of their health to rest and not have elevated heart rate.

The website below explains why the need for the activity restrictions during/after treatment:

<https://www.heartwormsociety.org/heartworm-positive-dogs#my-dog-is-going-to-be-treated-for-heartworms-why-does-she-have-to-be-restricted-her-exercise-restricted-for-so-long-what-can-i-do-to-help-her-from-being-bored>

Here is a link to some other mentally stimulating things you can try,

<http://www.mnn.com/family/pets/stories/10-brain-games-to-play-with-your-dog>

As always, we are here to help you and answer any questions you may have during this process and we thank you for your patience in the treatment of this disease.