

Pet's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



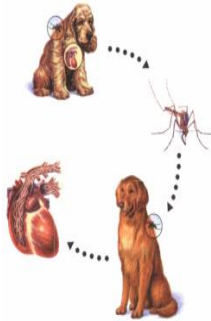
**Southside  
Animal  
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### Your Pet's Heartworm Test

**What are Heartworms?** Heartworms are a parasite that lives in the bloodstream of dogs and cats. They are present everywhere in the United States and are very common here in Georgia. As adults, heartworms are present in the lungs and heart of infected pets. In the lungs, they cause scarring which leads to a chronic cough. In the heart the scarring can lead to congestive heart failure. Any damage done by the heartworms is irreversible. However, they can be killed to prevent them from further damaging the lungs and heart. Common signs of heartworm infection in dogs are decreased activity, coughing, difficulty breathing, and a swollen abdomen.



**How does my pet get infected?** Heartworms are not directly contagious from pet to pet. They are transferred from pet to pet by mosquitoes. Mosquitoes bite an infected dog and obtain microfilaria, or "baby heartworms", from the infected dog. Microfilaria mature in the mosquito till they can infect another pet. When ready, they enter the bite wound made by the mosquito on another pet. Over the next 6 months, the heartworm develops into an adult heartworm. The adult heartworms then begin to produce more microfilaria to continue the cycle. It only takes one infected mosquito to infect your pet. Studies have shown that whether your pet is primarily indoors or outdoors, they are at equal risk for infection.

**What if my dog is infected?** If your dog is infected, we can treat most dogs and kill the adult heartworms. We perform blood work prior to treatment to make sure there are no other conditions that will increase your dog's risk during treatment. We use a drug called Immiticide to kill the heartworms. For a period of time following the treatment, your dog will need to avoid vigorous activity by being confined to a small space and only leashed walked, to allow your dog's body time to deal with the dead heartworms. Failure to do this can lead to major complications. Your pet may also need additional medications prior to or following treatment to prevent complications. Following treatment we will start your dog on prevention.

**How do I prevent heartworms?** Heartworm prevention is preferred to treatment. Every dog in Georgia needs to be on prevention. If they are not on prevention, it is a question of when they will become infected not if they will become infected. Prevention is an oral tablet or topical medication that is given one time a month. Any immature heartworms that were acquired the month before are killed by the heartworm prevention. If you are not on prevention, we can discuss with you your options and help you choose the best prevention for your pet.

**What about heartworm disease in cats?** Heartworm disease is less common in cats than in dogs but does occur. Clinical signs in cats are vomiting, difficulty breathing, or sudden death. There is no treatment for adult heartworms in cats. Prevention is the only option. We carry two options for heartworm prevention in cat, Advantage multi and Revolution. Both these products combine flea prevention with prevention for heartworms, ear mites, and certain intestinal parasites.

**Your Pet's Result** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Action Taken** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Recommended Recheck** \_\_\_\_\_