



Foothills Animal Hospital

Parasites, Prevention and your Dog

The parasites that we are most concerned about with our dogs are; fleas, heartworm, intestinal worms, ticks and mites.

Fleas. Unless your dog lives in a bubble, he or she is likely to come across fleas. Flea eggs and larvae are very tough and can live in dirt, bedding and flooring materials for many months. Adult fleas can jump from animal to animal. Flea infestation can cause severe irritation, flea allergy dermatitis, secondary infections and anaemia in small dogs. In some cases, the fleas can also transfer other parasites, such as tapeworms (which the dog ingests when they bite the fleas). We recommend your dog receives a monthly or three monthly (Bravecto) flea preventative year round.

Heartworms are spread by mosquito bite, so your dog's lifestyle does not affect his/ her vulnerability to this parasite. The heartworm larvae live in an infected dog's bloodstream and can be transferred to your dog whenever he/ she is bitten by a mosquito. The larvae then take 6 months to move into the heart and mature into adult worms. It is much safer for your dog to prevent heartworms with regular treatment than to try to cure a dog with adult worms in their heart, which could die and break off, lodging in the lungs. Untreated adult heartworms will cause heart failure in infected pets. We recommend your pet commences heartworm prevention before 6 months of age and continues this for life. Heartworm prevention can either be an annual injection (given at 6 months of age, 12 months of age then annually) or a monthly chew/ tablet/ spot on.

Intestinal worms need to be managed for both human and dog safety. Tapeworms are associated with hydatid disease in humans, and hookworms can infect children, causing a condition called 'larval migrans'. Dogs are exposed to intestinal worms through raw meats, other dog's faeces (or the ground/ grass where another dog has been to the toilet), and from their mum through the milk and across the placenta. We recommend that puppies are wormed fortnightly until they are 12 weeks of age, then monthly to 6 months of age, then every 3 months for life. If you use an 'all in one' product, you will still need to give your dog a quarterly tapewormer

Ticks are usually going to be found in scrub and bushland (unless you are very unlucky). We are fortunate in WA that we do not currently have the paralysis tick that is so dangerous in the Eastern States. However ticks can still transfer some diseases (eg Babesiosis) and cause discomfort for your pet. A tick bite can become infected and abscess. A heavy tick infestation can cause anaemia. If you live or walk your dog in a rural or semi rural location then we recommend using the three monthly oral tick prevention product Bravecto.



Warm hearts for cold noses 🐾



Mites. Otherwise known as 'mange', mites are microscopic parasites that can cause hair loss, itchiness & secondary infections in pets.

Demodex mites live in the skin of all animals, but normally only in low numbers. Puppies and dogs with impaired immune systems are more likely to have proliferation of Demodex mites and can suffer from hair loss, thickened skin, secondary infections and low level itchiness. Demodex infestation in adult dogs is often a sign of significant systemic illness or immunosuppression.

Sarcoptes mites do not normally live in the skin of dogs and are transferred to your pet by contact with wild animals or their immediate habitat (eg a fox's favourite route through the bush may harbor mites). An infected dog will be SUPER itchy and uncomfortable, especially around the ears & armpits. Hair loss, skin thickening & secondary infections are very common.

Diagnosis of mites is usually made through skin scraping & assessment under a microscope. This is not always diagnostic so we will often also recommend a treatment trial with a product called Bravecto- a three monthly flea, tick and mite preventative.

What do we recommend?

There are many very good parasite preventatives now available. These are the combinations that we recommend, based on the products that we stock and feel are the best choices for your dog.

1. If you are concerned about tick or sarcoptes mite exposure or like the convenience of less frequent medication

Then we recommend; The annual heartworm injection Prohart SR-12
; Plus Bravecto given once every 3 months
; and an intestinal allwormer given once every 3 months
eg milbemax.

2. If you are not concerned about ticks and prefer to minimize oral medications or your dog is not yet 6 months of age

Then we recommend ; Advocate monthly (spot on)
; and tapeworming tablet(s) once every 3 months (you could ask our nurses to give this)

3. If you do not wish to give flea, tick or mite prevention and do not want the annual heartworm injection

Then we recommend giving the allwormer Milbemax on a monthly basis. Milbemycin (the active ingredient) is registered for heartworm prevention if used monthly, but not if used every 3 months.

4. If your dog is MDR-1 positive (drug sensitivity mutation)

Then we recommend using good quality commercial monthly products such as Advocate and adhering carefully to the recommended dosage. These products are safe in the recommended dosage but NOT if that dosage is exceeded. Ideally use a pyraquantel + praziquantel based rather than milbemycin based intestinal wormer. Your dog cannot receive ivermectin derived medications at the doses required to treat mites.