



Heartworm Treatment Protocol for Dogs

The differences between “Treatment I” (sometimes called the ‘two step’ treatment) and “Treatment II” (sometimes called the “three step” treatment) is time, hospitalization and additional injection on Treatment II. Treatment for dogs more severely infected by heartworms must be staged over a longer period of time to prevent more damage to the heart or lungs. Dogs exhibiting problems from Treatment I after the first day’s treatment are moved into the longer treatment program, Treatment II, for the health and safety of the pet.

TREATMENT I —

Treatment for healthy dogs, testing positive (two tests given, blood smear and Idexx occult) to heartworms, that are not showing signs of caval syndrome or signs of congestive heart failure.

1. Injection on day one of Immiticide, dog is kept at vets overnight to observe possible reaction
2. Injection on day two of Immiticide, dog is kept overnight at vets to observe
Dog is released on day three, strict confinement for 30 days, kenneled, leash-walked only
3. Injection on day 31 of Ivermectin & DexSP (dexamethasone sodium phosphate), if dog has shown no sign of problems during the past 30 days, then dog can be allowed normal exercise and play and start of HW prevention.

TREATMENT II —

Treatment for debilitated dogs testing positive, or positive dogs showing signs of caval syndrome or signs of congestive heart failure.

1. Injection on day one of Immiticide, dog is kept at vets for two days for observation, or more (if exhibiting reaction, i.e. coughing up blood, breathing problems indicating adult worms are moving through pulmonary artery, etc.). It is critical to keep dogs under a vet’s care for at least two nights, or longer if exhibiting reactions to treatment.
2. Injection on day 31 of Immiticide, dog is kept at vets overnight to observe.
3. Injection on day 32 of Immiticide, dog is kept at vets for two nights to observe. More days required if exhibiting reaction.
4. Injection on day 62 of Ivermectin & DexSP (dexamethasone sodium phosphate), if dog has shown no sign of problems during the past 30 days, then dog can be allowed normal exercise and play.

Dog is protected from heartworms for 30 days after step 3 by the dose of Ivermectin, but it is recommended that heartworm preventative (Heartgard) is started or provided to foster care so it is not skipped on day 93.

NOTE: Dogs 5 months of age and younger rarely test positive for heartworms, and should be put on HW preventative (Heartgard) immediately. The window for HW is six months, so untreated dogs that test negative should be tested again six months after the first test.