



**FRANKTOWN  
ANIMAL CLINIC**  
*Compassionate care for pets and their people.*

# HEARTWORM DISEASE AND PREVENTION IN DOGS

As a pet owner, your dog's health and happiness are among your top priorities. At Franktown Animal Clinic, we aim to empower you with the knowledge needed to protect your furry friend from preventable health risks—and heartworm disease is one of the most critical threats we address.



## What Is Heartworm Disease?

Heartworm disease is a potentially fatal condition caused by a parasitic worm called *Dirofilaria immitis*. These worms are transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito. Once inside your dog's body, heartworm larvae travel to the heart, lungs, and blood vessels, where they mature and reproduce. Left untreated, the disease can lead to severe organ damage, heart failure, and even death.

### Heartworm Lifecycle

In about 6 months, adult worms produce microscopic larvae which can be transmitted through mosquito bites.

An infected mosquito bites a dog.

Adult heartworms settle in the heart, lungs, and nearby blood vessels, damaging organs and interfering with blood flow.

Microscopic larvae enter through the bite and develop in the tissues under the skin.

Over the next several weeks, the larvae grow and migrate through the body.

## Symptoms of Heartworm Disease

Heartworm disease can develop silently, with no obvious signs in its early stages. As the infection progresses, you might notice symptoms such as:

- Persistent cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Swollen abdomen due to fluid buildup
- Fatigue or reluctance to exercise
- Weight loss

If you notice any of these symptoms, it is essential to schedule a veterinary visit immediately.

## Why Prevention Matters

Heartworm disease is difficult, expensive, and sometimes dangerous to treat. Prevention is not only safer but also more cost-effective. Monthly preventatives or annual injections eliminate the risk of infection by killing heartworm larvae before they mature. These medications are safe, highly effective, and tailored to meet your pet's needs.

## Prevention Options

At Franktown Animal Clinic, we offer various FDA-approved heartworm preventatives, including:

- Monthly oral chewables
- Topical treatments
- Annual injections

## Testing for Heartworm

Even if your dog is on preventative medication, annual heartworm testing is essential. Why? Because no preventative is 100% effective, and early detection ensures treatment can begin before complications arise. Additionally, maintaining yearly testing and year-round prevention is crucial because, if your pet does contract heartworm, the preventative company may cover treatment costs if both conditions are met. Testing typically involves a simple blood draw and is quick, easy, and stress-free for your pet.

## Colorado and Heartworm Risk

While Colorado's colder climate might seem to reduce heartworm risk, mosquitoes—the primary carriers—can thrive in warm seasons and indoors. Heartworm cases have been reported throughout the state, making year-round prevention vital for every dog, regardless of where you live or travel.

## How We Can Help

Franktown Animal Clinic is here to guide you every step of the way. From discussing prevention options to performing routine tests, we're committed to keeping your dog healthy and heartworm-free. By prioritizing heartworm prevention, you're giving your dog the gift of a long, happy, and healthy life. If you have questions or need advice, our team is always ready to help.

***Call us today to learn more or to schedule your next appointment.***

***We are here to help keep your pets happy and healthy!***



**FRANKTOWN  
ANIMAL CLINIC**  
Compassionate care for pets and their people.

**7658 Burning Tree Drive, Franktown, CO 80116 • 303-688-4690 • [FranktownAnimalClinic.com](http://FranktownAnimalClinic.com)**