



Arkansas Veterinary Clinic
5701 South 28th St.
Fort Smith, AR 72908
(479)646-3478



Rick Hittner D.V.M.

ATTENTION ALL CUSTOMERS OF ARKANSAS VETERINARY CLINIC:

There has been a lot of discussion lately concerning Heartworm testing, Heartworm prevention, and prescription thereof. The following is my stance on the subject, and has its basis in the “Current Canine Guidelines for the Prevention, Diagnosis, and Management of Heartworms (*Dirofilaria immitis*) Infection in Dogs” (revised January 14, 2014) by the American Heartworm Society.

- 1) Antigen testing for the presence of heartworms is recommended at least annually.
- 2) Year round prevention to prevent heartworm disease, control other parasites, and prevent resistance is recommended.
- 3) “If records of past treatment and testing do not exist, it is necessary to test the patient before dispensing or prescribing chemoprophylaxis” (Current Guidelines, AHS, page 2)
- 4) “Before initiating a preventive regime on dogs 7 months of age or older, antigen and microfilaria testing should be performed immediately, then 6 months later, again in 6 months, and then annually thereafter” (Current Guidelines, AHS, page 2)
- 5) A valid doctor-client-patient relationship **MUST** exist, which includes recent visits with the patient and owner.

All of the preventive products available are closely related members of the same drug family. These drugs are prescription requiring. Although some of these products are available via online pharmacies, this is not the intended route of prescription by the manufacturers. Most of these pharmacies obtain product via a technique called diversion. This is where the pharmacy entices a veterinarian to sell them a large volume of prevention in bulk for a handsome profit to the veterinarian. This practice is frowned upon by manufacturers, and there are programs in place to track diversion and prevent future sales of product to the diverting veterinarian.

Products obtained through outlets that are supplied by diversion, are no longer covered under the manufacturers guarantee. As a consumer, there is no knowledge of where these products originated (some are foreign country or even counterfeit origin), how old they are (expired?), have they been tampered with, etc. Thus it is a safety risk to purchase via this route. In the event that you use these products and your pet is diagnosed with Heartworm disease, cost of treatment now rests on your shoulders.

When a Heartworm preventive is procured via valid veterinary relationship, after appropriate testing, a consumer can rest assured that the preventive has been obtained in a legal, valid, and safe fashion. Products purchased through veterinarians have come either directly from manufacturers or via manufacturer approved distributors, guaranteeing safety, freshness, and honesty.

As your pet’s veterinarian, it is my job to provide your pet with the best possible care that I can. I am to do that to the best of my ability using the latest knowledge, procedures, and medical therapies that I have available.

We all want your pet to live a long healthy life. I do not make recommendations to “make a buck” like many people seem to think. My interest lies in what is best, and safest for your pet.

Thus when discussing Heartworms and preventative, if your dog has not had a Heartworm test within the past 365 days that can be confirmed, **NO PREVENTION WILL BE DISPENSED AND NO PRESCRIPTION FOR PREVENTION WILL BE WRITTEN. NO PRESCRIPTIONS WILL BE GIVEN FOR ONLINE PHARMACY PURCHASE, EVER!!!!!!**

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and your understanding. I or my staff will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.