

**QUESTIONS  
LEAD TO  
BETTER ANSWERS  
FOR PETS**

Whether you're laying in the lawn chair or curled up beside it, mosquitoes can turn a perfect summer evening into a perfectly awful, itchy night. Just as mosquito bites can cause swelling and irritation on your skin, they can aggravate your dog. They can also transmit some very nasty diseases to humans and dogs.

**What's that red welt?**

What feels like a bite is really a mosquito's long, serrated mouthpart piercing your skin. It's called a proboscis, and the mosquito uses it to inject saliva including an anti-coagulant that keeps blood from clotting as it's sucked from your body. Chemicals in mosquito saliva inflame the skin and cause allergic reactions in most humans and animals. Reactions can vary from a small welt to lumps swelling across entire parts of the body. And since dogs tend to keep scratching itchy areas, even a minor mosquito bite may lead to a secondary infection.

**Are mosquito bites dangerous?**

It's actually female mosquitoes that do all the biting because they must have a "blood meal" to reproduce. As female mosquitoes suck blood, they may carry disease from one animal to another as they feed. In fact, mosquitoes are some of the most active



**Do Mosquitoes Bug Dogs  
(As Much As They Bug Us)?**

carriers of diseases on Earth, including malaria in humans, and West Nile virus and heartworm disease in animals.

Heartworms (known scientifically as *Dirofilaria immitis*), are potentially deadly if they infect a dog's heart or block lung arteries. The American Mosquito Control Association reports that, "Until the late '60s, heartworm disease was restricted to southern and eastern coastal regions of the United States. Now, however, cases have been reported in all 50 states."

**How can you protect your dog?**

Heartworm disease can be prevented. According to the American Heartworm Society (AHS), heartworm prevention is safe, easy and inexpensive

compared to treating a dog after worms have matured into adults. The AHS, and the Companion Animal Parasite Council (CAPC), recommend year-round prevention, even in seasonal areas, because dogs may be bitten by a mosquito in the summer and not test positive for up to 6½ months.

**Where do you start?**

Heartworm preventives are "legend" drugs, which means they are required by federal law to be prescribed by a licensed veterinarian. Before prescribing medication for heartworm disease, a veterinarian must test a dog to see if it is already infected. This is important because giving heartworm preventives to a dog that has heartworms can lead to harmful or even fatal reactions.

**What stops heartworm disease?**

Heartworm preventives work by stopping immature heartworms (larvae) from growing into adults. Medications, given monthly, protect your dog by killing any larvae that have invaded in the previous month. Some treatments, such as those from Virbac Animal Health, are made to protect against heartworm disease, and also treat and control roundworms, hookworms and tapeworms.

**Questions lead to better answers.**

Got the bug to find out more? For more advice about how to protect your dog from mosquitoes and heartworms, be sure to talk to your veterinarian. Details about heartworm disease can also be found at [www.iverhart.com](http://www.iverhart.com).