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Hurricanes and Heartworms:



Here is the weekly note written by D. Frantz...

Hurricanes and Heartworms:

We learned a lot about Heartworms after Hurricane Katrina. Dogs were suddenly sheltered together with other dogs of various medical backgrounds. Animals were transported to neighboring states or even air-shipped to states willing to re-home these pets after their owners were not found. Many shelter dogs were positive for heartworms. As you can imagine, coastal areas have more problems with Heartworms because they have more problems with mosquitos. And, dogs that arrived in shelters following the hurricane were often outdoor pets or abandoned pets who probably weren't on preventative measures. The cost to treat all these abandoned pets was phenomenal and other "soft kill" strategies were implemented. This led to drug resistance.

The American Heartworm Society created an algorithm to minimize the spread of Heartworm Disease while transporting and relocating dogs:

1. Test all dogs greater than six months of age for both the immature larva (microfilaria) and the adult worm.
2. If dogs test positive, reconsider relocating them and begin treatment.
3. If dogs test positive and relocation can't be postponed, make clear decisions that will enable the dog to travel safely, harbor low levels of microfilaria and/or practice STRICT mosquito control.
4. If dogs test negative, proceed with rehoming the dog. Start heartworm prevention immediately and repeat the heartworm tests at six months, then yearly.

The top five states for Heartworms are Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, and Tennessee. If you add in South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina, Alabama and Florida you'll get the top ten. With the exception of Tennessee and Arkansas, you can see all these coastal states battle Heartworms. And they also battle hurricanes, like Harvey and Irma.

The reasons behind the large numbers of Heartworms in these states aren't just wet conditions. A survey showed that many owners forget or skip doses of monthly heartworm prevention. Certainly wetter weather will increase the mosquitos. These states have also seen an increase of "out-of-state" transfer of pets in the last three years. And truth-be-known, pet owners simply won't give preventives.

I'm proud of Oklahomans who keep their dogs on yearly Heartworm prevention! With the advances in preventives, we can now offer the ProHeart injection which takes the "Oh no...I forgot" totally out of the picture! Every six months you'll get a call from your veterinarian reminding you it's time for ProHeart....easy-peasy.

And I'm also proud of Oklahomans who will step forward to help all injured, abandoned and orphaned animals from the great states of Texas and Florida and wherever else Harvey and Irma wrecked people's lives. Be diligent. Follow the American Heartworm Society guidelines for testing and retesting your pet for your first year. If your new pet needs treatment, understand that your adoption may be delayed. And keep your present pets on their preventative as usual to provide a safe and healthy home for whoever comes your way.

Please let us know if you have any questions or if there is anything we can help you with.

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