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How much is heartworm test

Have you ever wondered how much a heartworm test for your dog really costs? If you're a pet owner, this question might be on your mind, especially when it comes to keeping your furry friend healthy. Heartworm disease can be serious, and knowing the cost of testing can help you plan for your pet's healthcare needs. Average Cost Range: Heartworm tests for dogs typically cost between $45 and $100, depending on the testing method and veterinary facility.Testing Frequency: Dogs over six months old should undergo heartworm testing annually, especially if on preventative medication.Testing Methods: Key methods include antigen tests for quick results and microfilaria tests for detailed diagnosis, influencing overall costs.Cost Influencers: Factors like veterinary facility type, geographic location, and additional services (consultations, follow-up tests) significantly affect testing expenses.Preventative Care: Regular use of heartworm prevention medication enhances health safety, with additional monthly costs averaging $30 to $50.Early Detection Value: Regular testing is crucial for early heartworm detection, improving treatment success rates and maintaining overall pet health. Heartworm testing involves diagnosing the presence of heartworms using a blood sample from your dog. Testing usually occurs at veterinary clinics and is essential for early detection of heartworm disease. Antigen Tests: Antigen tests detect proteins released by female heartworms. Results typically return within the same day. Microfilaria Tests: These tests identify microfilariae, the larval stage of heartworms. They require a more comprehensive blood sample. Testing occurs annually for dogs over six months old, especially those on preventative medication. If your dog changes medication, testing might occur sooner. Costs vary based on location, veterinary clinic, and testing method. You can expect to pay between $45 and $100 for a basic heartworm test. Additional fees may arise for follow-up tests or extra services, like a full exam. During the visit, the veterinarian will take a blood sample from your dog. The process is quick and causes minimal discomfort. You'll receive results shortly after testing, enabling you to determine the next steps for your dog's health. Regular heartworm testing protects your dog from serious health risks. Detecting heartworms early increases treatment success rates and helps maintain your dog's overall wellbeing. Several key factors determine the cost of a heartworm test for dogs. Understanding these factors can help you plan for your pet's healthcare expenses effectively. The type of veterinary facility you choose affects the testing cost. Private Clinics: Typically charge less, ranging from $45 to $75. Emergency Clinics: Often charge more due to added services, potentially exceeding $100. Animal Hospitals: May include advanced diagnostic equipment, which can increase costs but often provides comprehensive care. Your geographic location plays a crucial role in testing costs. Urban Areas: Generally face higher costs due to increased demand and overhead expenses, often costing between $75 and $100. Rural Areas: Typically have lower costs, averaging around $45 to $60. Some facilities bundle services with heartworm testing, impacting the overall price. Consultation Fees: Fees for a vet's consultation can add $25 to $50. Preventative Care Packages: Combining testing with treatments or preventatives can provide savings, costing between $100 and $200 overall. Follow-Up Testing: If additional testing is needed, it can further increase costs, depending on the procedures. By considering these factors, you can better assess the likely expenses associated with heartworm testing for your dog. Heartworm tests play a crucial role in your dog's health management. Understanding the costs helps you budget for these essential services. You'll typically find heartworm tests priced between $45 and $60 at private veterinary clinics. This range often includes basic antigen tests. These tests detect heartworm proteins quickly, providing same-day results without additional services. For instance, if you visit a local vet in a rural area, you can expect to fall within this price bracket. Some clinics offer discounts or packages for multiple services that make it even more affordable. For more comprehensive testing or specialized clinics, costs can escalate to $75 or more, reaching up to $100 or higher at emergency clinics or animal hospitals. These facilities often offer additional services, such as thorough examinations or specialized blood work. For example, if you opt for advanced diagnostic equipment or additional consultations, these fees can add up quickly. You may also find bundled services that bundle heartworm tests with preventive care, potentially putting your total spending between $100 and $200. Understanding the costs associated with heartworm tests goes beyond just the initial price. Several factors play a significant role in determining the overall expenses related to your dog's heart health. Preventative care treatments often supplement heartworm tests, adding to your total expenses. You'll generally spend between $30 and $50 monthly on preventative medication. Regular use of these medications significantly reduces the risk of heartworm infection. For comprehensive health planning, your budget should also account for routine vet visits, vaccinations, and potential heartworm prevention packages. Many clinics offer yearly packages that can save you money while providing necessary services, typically costing between $150 and $250. Regular heartworm testing ensures early detection of infection and is essential for long-term health. Dogs over six months old need annual tests to stay protected. If you use heartworm preventative medication, ongoing testing helps confirm its effectiveness. Many pet owners overlook this crucial step, which can lead to higher healthcare costs if heartworm disease develops. Timely detection facilitates easier treatment, enhancing the chances of successful outcomes. Understanding the costs of heartworm testing is crucial for your dog's health and well-being. By staying informed about the different testing methods and their associated prices you can better plan for your furry friend's healthcare needs. Regular testing not only helps catch any issues early but also saves you from potentially higher treatment costs down the line. Don't forget to factor in preventative care as part of your budgeting. Keeping your dog protected against heartworms is a wise investment in their long-term health. With the right planning and regular check-ups you'll ensure your pup stays happy and healthy for years to come. Heartworm testing for dogs is a procedure that detects the presence of heartworms through a blood sample. It is crucial for diagnosing heartworm disease, which can be serious and life-threatening if untreated. Heartworm testing costs typically range from $45 to $100. The price varies based on factors such as the veterinary facility type, geographic location, and whether additional services are included. The two main types of heartworm tests are antigen tests and microfilaria tests. Antigen tests detect proteins from female heartworms and provide same-day results, while microfilaria tests identify the larval stage of heartworms through a more comprehensive blood sample. Dogs over six months old should be tested annually for heartworms, especially if they are on preventative medication. Regular testing helps in early detection and successful treatment. Yes, additional costs may arise from consultation fees and extra services like comprehensive examinations or specialized blood work. These can increase the overall price of heartworm testing significantly. Preventative care is essential as it can reduce the risk of heartworm infection. Monthly medications typically cost between $30 to $50, making prevention more affordable than treating the disease after infection. Pet owners should budget for routine vet visits, vaccinations, and heartworm prevention packages, which can total between $150 to $250 annually. Regular testing is an important part of this budget for long-term health. When it comes to heartworm treatment costs for dogs, keep in mind that price will be influenced by where you live, the type of office or vet clinic, how sick your dog is, their size, and other factors. The total cost of treating heartworms in dogs can range from around $600 to more than $3000. It's always a good idea to ask your vet what costs to expect when dealing with heartworm disease for your dog. Let's break down all heartworm treatment costs for dogs. Heartworm Test Before being treated for heartworms, a dog must first test positive for the disease. A heartworm test is a standard test during routine annual exams for dogs or when a dog has any signs of heartworm disease. The most common heartworm tests (called antigen tests) can be done right in your vet's office, where the results may be available within minutes. It's recommended that all dogs be tested annually for heartworm disease, even if they are on heartworm prevention. A heartworm antigen test may range anywhere between $35 to $75. Confirmatory Test If the in-office heartworm test is positive your veterinarian will recommend a confirmatory test to verify the positive test result. The confirmatory test should be of a different type than the initial heartworm test. Tests that check for the presence of microfilariae (immature heartworms in the blood) are common. Since no test is perfect—and heartworm treatment is expensive and can have significant side effects—your veterinarian will want to be certain that treatment is necessary before proceeding. Confirmatory tests will vary but generally range in price between $20 to $40. Additional Testing Once a dog has been fully confirmed as being heartworm positive, additional tests such as chest X-rays and sometimes an ultrasound of the heart (echocardiogram), lungs, or other parts of the body, are done to understand the stage and severity of the disease. Staging helps the veterinarian assess the level of damage that has already been done by the heartworms and the dog's prognosis, as well as determine specific treatment and post-treatment regimens. The cost of chest X-rays generally varies from $125 to $200, and the cost of an echocardiogram can be between $300 to $1,000. Initial Treatment Treatment generally begins as soon as possible (Day 0) after a positive diagnosis of heartworm disease. Initial treatment steps are taken to: Stabilize the dog's condition so they can better handle heartworm treatment Eliminate immature heartworms Decrease the risks associated with melarsomine (the medication that is used to kill the adult heartworms) Doxycycline and Steroids Before melarsomine is administered, affected dogs are usually put on a month's course of doxycycline ($30 to $150), which is an antibiotic that kills bacteria that are usually associated with heartworms. Dogs that are showing symptoms of disease, such as coughing or exercise intolerance, are generally also started on a steroid ($10 to $40) to help reduce inflammation. The cost of doxycycline and steroids vary depending on the size of your dog. Other medications may be needed as well. Heartworm Preventative A prescription heartworm preventative is usually administered on day 0 and day 30, to kill heartworm larvae. A month long waiting period is observed after the initial 30 days of treatment. Heartworm prevention should then continue all year round. Heartworm tablets typically cost between $6 to $18. Exercise Restriction It's important to note that as soon as a dog is diagnosed with heartworm disease, exercise restriction should ensue. Exercise restriction generally consists of strict crate rest. Dogs should be on a leash anytime they are outside of the crate to eat, spending time with their people, urinating, and defecating. Final Stages of Treatment The final stages of heartworm treatment serve to kill the adult heartworms. This "adulticide" treatment generally involves three injections of melarsomine. On days 60, 90, and 91 of the treatment process an injection of melarsomine is administered deep into the lumbar musculature of your dog's back. The dosage of melarsomine is weight dependent. A round of steroids ($10 to $40) is usually prescribed for several weeks after each injection. Pain control may also be needed. A series of melarsomine injections and the associated care your dog will receive while in the hospital may cost anywhere from approximately $500 to$1,500, depending on the weight of your dog. Strict exercise restriction should continue for at least another month after the final melarsomine injection, followed by a gradual return to normal activity levels. Follow-Up Testing Approximately one month (day 120) after the third melarsomine injection, your dog's blood should be evaluated for the presence of microfilariae. The microfilaria test costs between $20 to $40. If the microfilaria test is positive, the dog should continue heartworm prevention for four weeks and then be retested. Approximately nine months after the third melarsomine injection (one year after the initial diagnosis of heartworm disease), a heartworm test is run ($35 to $75). If the test is positive, the dog should be treated with another round of doxycycline ($30 to $150), followed by two injections of melarsomine 24 hours apart ($500 to $1,000). Caval Syndrome If your dog is very ill or weakened due to heartworm disease, your veterinarian may not consider them to be a good candidate for melarsomine treatment. For example, dogs that are very severely affected by heartworm disease may develop a complication known as caval syndrome. Caval syndrome occurs when adult heartworms occupy so much of the right side of the heart that they disrupt the flow of blood from the heart to the lungs. Caval syndrome is characterized by collapse, shock, and destruction of red blood cells. It is usually fatal.The only form of treatment is surgical removal of heartworms from the heart, which must be done on an emergency basis. This surgery can cost anywhere between $3,000 to $6,000. The cost of heartworm prevention is much lower when compared to the cost of having to treat your dog for heartworms. Heartworm treatment is undoubtedly expensive. It is also uncomfortable for the dog, has significant side effects, and requires prolonged activity restriction. Melarsomine treatment must be preceded by a series of diagnostic tests and treatments that may cost anywhere from an additional $100 to over $1,000. These costs will vary depending on the size of your dog, the severity of disease, and the recommendations of your veterinarian. Then, the cost of melarsomine heartworm treatment may vary from $500 to $1,500. If the initial doses of treatment are not completely effective, repeat treatment may be required, which may cause this cost to double. Fortunately, there are readily available, affordable, heartworm preventive medications that can help protect your dog from this disease in the first place. It's important to remember that as a pet parent you follow directions on the product label and to not lapse in coverage. Heartworm prevention requires a prescription from your veterinarian and is typically administered monthly as a tablet or topical solution that costs between $6 and $18 per month. It's generally recommended that heartworm medications be administered year-round to best prevent against these deadly parasites. The cost of a heartworm test for your dog typically ranges from $35 to $75. This price can vary depending on your location, the veterinary clinic you choose, and whether the test is part of a larger wellness exam. While this might seem like an additional expense, it's a crucial investment in your dog's health and well-being. Remember, early detection and prevention are always more affordable and less stressful than treating a full-blown heartworm infection.Understanding Heartworm DiseaseBefore delving further into the cost aspects, it's essential to understand what heartworm disease is and why testing is so critical. Heartworm disease is a serious and potentially fatal condition caused by parasitic worms that live in the heart, lungs, and associated blood vessels of affected animals. These worms are transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito.Once a dog is bitten by an infected mosquito, the heartworm larvae migrate through the bloodstream and eventually mature into adult worms. These adult worms can grow up to a foot long and can cause significant damage to the heart, lungs, and other organs.Prevention is Key: The good news is that heartworm disease is largely preventable. Regular testing and year-round preventative medication are the cornerstones of protecting your dog from this devastating illness. Ignoring these preventative measures can lead to significant health problems and expensive treatments down the line. The Environmental Literacy Council offers resources about the impacts of parasites and vectors on environmental health.Why is Heartworm Testing Important?Early Detection: A heartworm test can detect the presence of heartworm antigens (proteins) in your dog's bloodstream, even if the infection is still in its early stages. Early detection significantly improves the chances of successful treatment and minimizes damage to your dog's organs.Preventative Medication Safety: Heartworm preventatives are designed to kill heartworm larvae, not adult worms. Administering a preventative medication to a dog that already has adult heartworms can be harmful and potentially fatal. A heartworm test ensures that your dog is free of adult worms before starting or continuing preventative medication.Annual Screening: Even if your dog is on year-round preventative medication, annual heartworm testing is still recommended. No preventative is 100% effective, and there's always a slight risk of infection. Annual testing provides an extra layer of protection and peace of mind.Cost-Effectiveness: As mentioned earlier, the cost of treating heartworm disease is significantly higher than the cost of annual testing and preventative medication. Treatment can involve multiple vet visits, medications, and potentially even surgery. Investing in preventative care is a smart financial decision in the long run.Types of Heartworm TestsVeterinarians primarily use two types of blood tests to detect heartworms in dogs:Antigen Test: This is the most common type of heartworm test. It detects the presence of antigens (proteins) released by adult female heartworms. Antigen tests are generally very accurate, especially in detecting infections with multiple adult female worms.Microfilariae Test: This test looks for the presence of microfilariae (baby heartworms) in the dog's blood. While less common than antigen tests, microfilariae tests can be helpful in confirming a positive antigen test or in cases where the antigen test is inconclusive.In most cases, your veterinarian will perform an antigen test as the primary screening tool. If the antigen test is positive, they may perform additional tests, such as a microfilariae test or chest X-rays, to assess the severity of the infection and determine the best course of treatment.Where Can You Get Your Dog Tested?Veterinarian's Office: The most reliable and recommended place to get your dog tested for heartworms is at your veterinarian's office. Veterinarians have the expertise and equipment to perform accurate tests and interpret the results correctly.PetSmart: As mentioned in the original text, some PetSmart locations offer heartworm testing for dogs. However, it's essential to ensure that the testing is performed by qualified veterinary professionals.Home Heartworm Test Kits: While there are home heartworm test kits available, their accuracy can be questionable. It's always best to rely on a veterinarian for accurate testing and diagnosis.Factors Affecting the Cost of Heartworm TestingSeveral factors can influence the cost of a heartworm test:Location: Veterinary prices tend to vary depending on geographic location. Clinics in urban areas or regions with a higher cost of living may charge more for heartworm tests than those in rural areas.Veterinary Clinic: Different veterinary clinics have different pricing structures. It's always a good idea to call around and compare prices before scheduling a heartworm test.Wellness Exam: A heartworm test is often included as part of a comprehensive wellness exam. If your dog is due for their annual checkup, the cost of the heartworm test may be bundled into the overall exam fee.Additional Tests: If the initial heartworm test is positive or inconclusive, your veterinarian may recommend additional tests to confirm the diagnosis and assess the severity of the infection. These additional tests will add to the overall cost.Year-Round Heartworm PreventionHeartworm prevention is not just a seasonal concern; it's a year-round commitment. Mosquitoes, the carriers of heartworm larvae, can be active even in the winter months, especially in warmer climates. Consistent, year-round preventative medication is the best way to protect your dog from heartworm disease.Types of Preventative MedicationHeartworm preventatives are available in various forms, including:Monthly Chewable Tablets: These are a popular and convenient option for many dog owners.Topical Solutions: Applied directly to the skin, these solutions offer another easy way to administer preventative medication.Injectable Medications: ProHeart 6 and ProHeart 12 are injectable medications that provide six months or twelve months of heartworm protection, respectively.ProHeart 6 is a heartworm prevention shot that lasts six months, costing approximately $50 to $150 per dose.ProHeart 12 is an annual shot, costing approximately $75 to $350 per year.Your veterinarian can help you choose the most appropriate preventative medication for your dog based on their individual needs and lifestyle.What Happens if Your Dog Tests Positive for Heartworms?If your dog tests positive for heartworms, prompt treatment is crucial. Heartworm treatment typically involves a series of injections to kill the adult worms, along with supportive medications to manage any complications. The treatment process can be lengthy, expensive, and potentially risky, but it's the only way to eliminate the heartworm infection and prevent further damage to your dog's organs.The Cost of TreatmentThe average cost of heartworm treatment for dogs ranges from $500 to $1,100, but it can be significantly higher depending on the severity of the infection and the specific treatment protocol. Factors that can influence the cost of treatment include:Size of the Dog: Larger dogs typically require higher doses of medication, which can increase the cost of treatment.Stage of the Disease: Dogs with more advanced heartworm disease may require more intensive treatment, which can also increase the cost.Veterinary Clinic: Different veterinary clinics have different pricing structures for heartworm treatment.Complications: If your dog develops complications during treatment, such as lung inflammation or blood clots, this can add to the overall cost.Diagnostic Tests: Tests and X-rays are performed to measure the heartworm infection.Financial AssistanceIf you're struggling to afford heartworm treatment for your dog, there are resources available to help. Contact your local animal shelters or non-profit organizations that may offer financial assistance for veterinary care. You can also talk to your veterinarian about setting up a payment plan or negotiating the cost of treatment.FAQs: Heartworm Testing for DogsHere are 15 frequently asked questions to further clarify the subject of heartworm testing for dogs:Do vets need poop for a heartworm test? No, a heartworm test is performed using a small blood sample. An intestinal parasite test is performed using a small stool sample.What are the first signs of heartworms in dogs? Common symptoms include seeming breathless or struggling to catch their breath, coughing after exercise, refusing to exercise or play, seeming lethargic or weak, a bulging chest cavity, unintentional weight loss, loss of appetite, and an irregular heartbeat.Can I get heartworm medicine without a vet? No, all heartworm preventatives require a prescription from a veterinarian.Does PetSmart test for heartworm? Yes, some PetSmart locations offer heartworm testing for dogs. Ensure qualified veterinary professionals perform the testing.Can I give my dog a heartworm test at home? While at-home tests exist, veterinarian-administered tests are more accurate and recommended for a reliable diagnosis.At what age do dogs need a heartworm test? Adult dogs over 7 months of age and previously not on a preventive need to be tested prior to starting heartworm prevention.Why is dog heartworm so expensive? Many factors affect the cost, including diagnostic testing, hospitalization, medication, and office visits. The current drug of choice, Immiticide, can be expensive and difficult to obtain due to manufacturing issues.How long does a heartworm test take at the vet? The test requires a small blood sample and takes approximately 10 minutes to complete.Can my dog eat before a heartworm test? Generally, fasting is not required for a heartworm test unless the vet advises otherwise for other concurrent blood work.Can you give Heartgard without a heartworm test? The American Heartworm Society recommends annual testing, and it's important never to give Heartgard to any pet that hasn't been tested for heartworm disease.Are dogs in pain when they have heartworms? Dogs can experience discomfort, especially with a swollen belly due to fluid accumulation.What time of year do dogs get heartworm? Although mosquitoes are less prevalent in winter, heartworm prevention should be year-round to protect against potential exposure.What can be mistaken for heartworms? Other larval worms occurring in the lung might be confused with D. immitis, although these are much less common.What happens if I don't give my dog heartworm prevention? Heartworm infection can become severe if left untreated, leading to life-threatening health conditions and even death.How do dogs feel when they have heartworms? They may exhibit a mild persistent cough, reluctance to exercise, fatigue after moderate activity, decreased appetite, and weight loss. As the disease progresses, they may develop heart failure and a swollen belly.ConclusionInvesting in annual heartworm testing and year-round preventative medication is one of the best things you can do for your dog's health and well-being. While the cost of a heartworm test may seem like an extra expense, it's a small price to pay for the peace of mind knowing that your furry friend is protected from this deadly disease. Remember to consult with your veterinarian to develop a heartworm prevention plan that's tailored to your dog's individual needs and lifestyle. Visit enviroliteracy.org to find out more information about parasites and environmental health. Photo: Austin Community College Unfortunately, many dog owners underestimate the importance of dog heartworm treatment and the seriousness of this disease. The truth is: heartworm disease in dogs can be fatal if left untreated. In this post, we'll answer the big question: how much is a dog heartworm treatment? We'll also briefly discuss the disease, plus the signs and symptoms to watch out for. So, is your dog protected? Let's break down the real cost of dog heartworm treatment—and how prevention can save you money and heartbreak. RELATED: Taking a Very Close Look at Causes of Heartworm in Dogs What Is Heartworm Disease in Dogs? Heartworm disease is caused by the parasite Dirofilaria immitis, transmitted through mosquito bites. When a carrier mosquito bites a dog, it transmits the eggs or larvae into the dog's body, where they mature into adult worms and live in the heart, lungs, or other blood vessels. Heartworm disease is a serious and potentially fatal condition that affects dogs worldwide. Despite continuous preventative efforts, heartworm cases are still on the rise and are recorded in all 50 states. The American Heartworm Society reported that in 2011, there were about 800,000 heartworm-positive dogs in the United States; two decades later, that number grew to over 1.2 million cases. RELATED: 3 Safe and Effective Natural Mosquito Repellents for Dogs Signs & Symptoms When left untreated, heartworm disease can lead to severe lung disease, heart failure, and damage to other organs. The mild signs and symptoms to watch out for include: persistent coughing lethargy reluctance to exercise or move around noticeable fatigue even after light activity decreased appetite weight loss As you notice, these are similar to most other health conditions' signs and symptoms. The tricky part about recognizing dog heartworm disease is that the symptoms often don't show until the condition is advanced. Severe signs of heartworm disease include: labored breathing heart failure swollen belly (due to excess fluid) blockages of blood flow within the heart We've discussed more signs to watch out for in the article linked below. RELATED: How Do I Know If My Dog Has Heartworms? Remember that delaying treatment will increase the risks of complications, and advanced cases of heartworm disease are more difficult and expensive to treat. How Much Is a Dog Heartworm Treatment? Understanding the costs associated with heartworm treatment is crucial for pet owners to make informed decisions about their dog's health and finances. A fair warning: it's not going to be cheap. According to various veterinary sources, pet owners can expect to pay an average of $500 to $1,800 per round of heartworm treatment. Most dogs require two or more rounds of treatments, depending on the severity of the case. The approximate cost per round of heartworm treatments: Mild to moderate cases: $500 – $1,200 Severe or advanced cases: $1,200 – $1,800+ Follow-up exams and bloodwork may cost extra. In more severe cases, costs can escalate up to $6,000. For easier reference, here's a breakdown of the step-by-step procedure and its costs, from diagnosing to treating dog heartworm disease. Step-by-Step Procedure Average 2025 Cost Purpose & Frequency 1. Initial Positive Heartworm Test (Antigen Test) $35 – $75 Detects adult female heartworms; often part of annual screening. Performed once initially and during annual checkups. 2. Confirmatory Test (Microfilariae Test) $20 – $40 Checks for the presence of baby heartworms (microfilariae) in the bloodstream. Confirms infection stage. Done once after a positive antigen test. 3. Confirming Stage of Heartworm Disease → Chest X-Ray $150 – $250 Evaluates heart and lung condition; determines severity and treatment risk. Required once before treatment begins. → Echocardiogram $300 – $600 Optional but helpful in advanced cases; provides real-time heart function imaging. Usually done once. → Blood Work (CBC, chemistry panel) $100 – $200 Assesses organ function, especially the liver and kidneys, before starting medications. May be repeated post-treatment. 4. Initial Treatment Phase → Doxycycline (30 days) $11-$16 (for 30 tablets) It kills Wolbachia bacteria, weakens heartworms, and reduces inflammation. Oral antibiotics are taken daily, usually for 4 weeks. → Prednisone (2–4 weeks) $8 – $15 (for 30 tablets) A corticosteroid that reduces inflammation and prevents complications during treatment. Administered under vet guidance. → Melarsomine Injections (2–3 doses) $500 – $1,500 An injectable drug that kills adult heartworms. Given in stages: first injection, followed by two injections 24 hours apart, a month later. → Pain relievers / additional steroids $30 – $80 Helps manage injection site soreness and systemic inflammation. Prescribed as needed during treatment. 5. Hospitalization & Monitoring (Severe Cases) $600 – $3,500 per night Required for dogs with advanced heartworm disease or complications. Includes IV fluids, oxygen, and ECG monitoring. May last 1–3 days. 6. Follow-Up Checkups & Testing $25 – $186 per visit Follow-up bloodwork and heartworm tests are done at 6 and 12 months post-treatment to confirm heartworm elimination. If positive, retesting may be required. 7. Long-Term Heartworm Preventatives $70 – $200/year Monthly meds like Heartgard, Interceptor, or Simparica Trio prevent reinfection. Given for life. Prescription required. Remember that these costs will vary depending on your dog's size and weight, the stage or severity of the heartworm infection, your location, and any complications that may arise during treatment and recovery. RELATED: Does Pet Insurance Cover Medication? Why Heartworm Treatment Is So Expensive As you probably understand by now, dog heartworm treatment costs are no joke, and will seriously put a dent in your pocket, especially in a worst-case scenario. The main reason it's ridiculously expensive is the specialized medication needed to kill the parasitic worm in your dog's body. Melarsomine dihydrochloride is an arsenic-based compound that requires careful handling and administration by trained veterinary professionals. It cannot be administered at home. The treatment also spans several months and includes multiple veterinary visits, injections, and follow-up tests, the costs of which pile up over time. Close monitoring, and sometimes hospitalization, is important to stop possible risks and severe reactions as the parasites die. Preventative vs. Treatment Costs of Dog Heartworm Disease We always hear or read this, but as cliche as it may sound, prevention is definitely better (and more affordable) than a cure! Investing in heartworm prevention is significantly more cost-effective than treatment. While monthly preventive medications typically cost between $6 and $16 or $70 to $200 annually, treating an established heartworm infection can cost ten times as much! Not to mention the debilitating experience of stress, pain, and discomfort your dog will feel if infected. Common Heartworm Preventatives Several FDA-approved heartworm preventatives that are available on a prescription basis include: Heartgard Plus®: A monthly chewable that also protects against certain intestinal parasites. Interceptor®: Another monthly chewable offering protection against heartworms and intestinal worms. Revolution®: A topical solution that protects against heartworms, fleas, and certain mites. Another bonus benefit of most heartworm preventatives includes protection against fleas, ticks, hookworms, roundworms, etc. Make sure to speak with your veterinarian about which brand they recommend and the proper administration to ensure effectiveness. In addition, your dog must undergo the heartworm test annually, which costs about $45–$100. RELATED: Sunday's Recap: Heartworm Prevention in Dogs FAQs about Heartworm Treatment in Dogs 1. Can heartworm in dogs go away without treatment? No. Heartworm disease does not go away on its own and will worsen over time, potentially leading to heart failure and death. 2. How long does heartworm treatment take? The full treatment process, including pre-treatment medications, injections, and restricted exercise, typically lasts 4 to 6 months. 3. Is heartworm treatment painful for dogs? Some dogs experience pain at the injection site or fatigue during recovery, but most recover well with proper care and rest. 4. Can I treat my dog's heartworms at home? No. Heartworm treatment requires vet-administered medications and close monitoring. At-home remedies are not safe or effective. 5. What happens if I can't afford heartworm treatment? Ask your vet about payment plans, CareCredit, or local pet assistance programs. In some cases, a slow-kill method may be discussed. In this method, dogs are given a combination of heartworm preventative and doxycycline for a set period, sometimes up to a year or longer. However, the slow-kill method is not recommended by the American Heartworm Society. RELATED: TOP #88: Paying for Veterinary Expenses You Can't Afford Dog Heartworm Treatment: Before You Go… Heartworm treatment is expensive, but it's necessary and lifesaving. Knowing how much a dog's heartworm treatment costs can help you prepare and take steps to avoid it altogether. Just make sure to: Keep your dog on monthly preventatives year-round. Schedule annual heartworm tests, even if your dog is indoors. Talk to your vet about budget-friendly options if cost is a concern. Has your dog gone through heartworm treatment? Share your story or tips in the comments below! You can also check out some of our recommended and related articles linked below! Related Articles: Disclosure: We may earn affiliate commissions at no cost to you from the links on this page. 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