

FECAL AND HEARTWORM TEST FAQ'S

Fecal exams are part of our annual wellness program because:

- Parasite eggs are microscopic, and rarely are mature worms passed in the stool, so a pet can be carrying and shedding infective eggs and larvae without any outward clinical signs
- Worms are not only contagious between dogs and cats, but some of the most common types of internal **parasites can also be passed to humans** (zoonotic potential).
- Children, the elderly, and those with suppressed immune systems are likely to have severe health consequences of infection with the parasites that our animals may be carrying.
- Positive results are seen very frequently, and are easily treated with the right inexpensive medication.
- We can easily collect a small stool sample during the visit, or a fresh sample (less than 12 hours) may be collected at home and brought to us in a sealed airtight baggie, leaving as little air inside the baggie as possible to slow down the maturation of the eggs for the best detection in the lab.

Heartworm tests and seasonal preventative are part of our annual wellness program because:

- Heartworms have been detected in all 50 states. They are carried by mosquitoes and transmitted by mosquito bites, which are very difficult to prevent.
- Heartworm infection causes serious health consequences to the heart and lungs. The treatment for an established infection is expensive and also carries its own set of potential health risks.
- Heartworm preventative medication can be administered seasonally in western Nebraska, rather than year round, as mosquitoes do not survive the winter.
- A heartworm test must be performed prior to starting the seasonal preventative because if a dog were to have been infested with heartworms, (adult worms in the heart) a dose of the preventative medication could kill the adult worms quickly, releasing antigens from the dead worms that often cause anaphylactic shock and death. Infected animals that receive preventative also are at risk for allowing the worms to pass out of the heart into the bloodstream causing a blockage and possible death. Testing is done to ensure that no adult worms are present, thus preventing this potentially fatal situation.
- The American Heartworm Society also recommends annual testing.
- Heartworm preventative is easy to give (a tasty chewable treat once monthly), inexpensive, and has the added benefit of preventing not only heartworms, but also clearing our pets' bodies of other internal parasites on a monthly basis, keeping them in good health and reducing the risk of our exposure to potentially zoonotic parasites.