The “Heart” of a Prevention Conversation
April 30 – May 13, 2012
By
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AAHA gratefully acknowledges Merial for their sponsorship of this web conference.

What is 12.12.12?
- Initiative developed to help veterinary professionals increase the pet protection from heartworms
- Easy to achieve
- Involves all members of the practice team
- Supported by AAHA
- Sponsored by Merial

Why is Year Round Prevention Important?
- Incidence and distribution of heartworm infection have grown
  - Reservoirs among untreated dogs and wildlife
  - Environmental and habitat changes
  - Mobile society
- Seasonal administration of heartworm preventive creates too many windows of unprotected infection
  - Start/stop times for heartworm preventive are too unpredictable.
Goal of **12.12.12**

- Convert an additional **12%** of dogs to year round (12 month) heartworm preventive
- That means an additional **12** dogs per month per full-time veterinarian, or just **3** dogs per veterinarian per week
- Reach the goal by **12-31-2012**

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Implementing **12.12.12**

Success necessitates that the entire team:
1) **Understand** the recommendation
2) **Believe** in the recommendation
3) **Uniformly advocate** for the recommendation

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Making **12.12.12** a Reality

Our objective – getting the client to **agree with, trust and act upon** the recommendation of the veterinarian
Current Situation

• Infected pets are approximately 1 million*
• Geographic distribution
• Advantages of preventives
  – Convenient, Safe, Effective, Affordable
• Compared to treatment
  – Expense, Morbidity, Difficult for owner and hard on pet, Residual effects of heartworm disease


TRENDS
Veterinary Visits & Parasiticide Product Dispensing

Trends in protected pets, 2009-11

Compliance

• Disappointing compliance
• In past surveys, 48% and 59% of owned dogs in the United States received monthly heartworm prevention
  • Average of 5.4 doses dispensed per dog per year.
• Veterinary clinic practice management software audits shows just
  • 15% are on year-round heartworm prevention
  • 64% of canine patients receive no heartworm preventive at all
Why Don’t They Comply?

• Don’t appreciate the value
• Aren’t informed or educated
• Preventive not clearly recommended
• Hear conflicting recommendations
• Staff doesn’t follow up
• Not sure they believe

The “Value Proposition”

• **Medical expertise** (knowledge and experience, including services and a clean, well-equipped facility).
• A **relationship with the owner** and his/her pets (often generations of pets).
• A clear **commitment to the lifetime health of the pet**.

How do we Get to “Yes” on Heartworm Prevention?

Trust and confidence are key to client agreement

It’s all about relationships
What is Standing in the Way?

- Recommendations by veterinarians and staff are not consistent
- Clients may not receive a recommendation
- Clients may not perceive the need as important
  - It may seem optional

First Steps to Increased Compliance

Staff commitment and training:
- Develop your practice recommendation and protocols
- Gain commitment from every staff member
- Define roles and responsibilities
- Ensure all staff understands and communicate
- Stress the importance of 100% staff compliance

Everyone Has to be on the Same Page
Misperceptions

- “We don’t have heartworms in our area...we don’t even test!”
- “Wrong mosquitoes in our area”
- “Climate won’t support mosquitoes and heartworm”

Reality

- Heartworm infection and disease has been identified in all fifty states and Canada
- Most mosquitoes can carry heartworms
- Animals can become infected all year long

What is an Acceptable Risk and is it Your Decision?

- Preventives are
  - Very effective
  - Simple
  - Affordable
- Treatment
  - Expensive
  - Not always effective
  - Recovery is hard
  - There is residual damage from worms in pulmonary vasculature
Which of Your Clients Does not Deserve to be Informed and Educated?

- There is a risk
- It is right to make the recommendation and advocate for the preventive
- Give the owner a chance to say “yes” to protect the health of their pet

Form Consensus Among Staff

- Expert opinions
  - AHS
  - CAPC
  - AAHA and AVMA
- All advocate for year round preventive
  - Yearly heartworm testing along with yearly fecal
- Address concerns of staff
- Agree that all staff will become advocates for pet health
- Staff must be compliant with practice recommendations

Everyone Has to be on Board
Involve the Entire Staff

• Goal - Provide the best care and recommendations for all patients
• Be consistent and support each other in having these discussions
• It's simple, it's just not easy
• Ensure that every pet owner hears the recommendations for heartworm control often
• Agree that everyone will deliver the same message and recommendations and will work to protect as many dogs as possible

The Pet’s Health is a Team Effort

Veterinarian and staff must:
– Introduce and recommend
– Communicate
– Advocate
– Facilitate
– Follow up
Everyone has a Role

• Consistently make the recommendation and ADVOCATE for it
  – Explain the risk and health consequences
  – Get agreement from the pet owner that they want to prevent heartworm disease in their pet.
  – Make sure they get the product their pet needs to be protected.

Relationships Start at “Hello”

From the first handshake of the client and the veterinarian to the client’s departure from the clinic to follow-up phone calls

• They Want a Relationship...even if limited:
  – Shake hands and introduce self
  – Make eye contact...What color are they?
  – Explain and offer choices
  – Clarify
  – Encourage questions
Client Service Specialists

- It all starts with the phone call
  - Remind client to bring fecal
  - Inquire about current heartworm prevention
  - Heartworm test is due; stress importance of it
- Pull chart in advance
  - Check current vaccine and parasite control status
  - Be sure client information is correct with email, cell phone, home information
- Greet people and pets “15 ft/5 ft”

Client Service Specialists

- Mention:
  - Past due vaccines
  - Heartworm and fecal tests
  - Other tests needed
- Check record for:
  - Medication refills
  - Flea and tick products
  - Heartworm preventive
  - Offer to have ready when the client leaves.

Veterinary Technicians

- Greet dog!
- Greet client by name and with smile and handshake
- Make frequent eye contact
- Take history
- Bring up current points for discussion
  - At the beginning of the exam! “Do you have any specific questions?”
  - At the end of the exam. “Have we covered everything”
Veterinary Technicians

- Discuss heartworms as a health risk
- Educate the client on heartworm infection and disease
- Ask permission to draw heartworm test
  - To be sure not infected

Veterinarians

- Remember...people want to do business with people they know and like.
- Be sure you develop a relationship with the pet owner from the beginning.
  - Smile!
  - Greet pet by name
  - Establish eye contact
  - Greet client by name
  - Introduce yourself
  - Shake hands

They need to know how their pet gets heartworms
- They need to know what can happen if heartworms develop and reach the heart and lungs.
- They need to know how heartworm preventives work and why administration every 30 days, all year long, is so important.
Veterinarians

- Perform complete physical exam
  - Discuss steps and findings
  - Perform risk assessment
- Discuss and administer vaccines
- Discuss internal and external parasites
  - Recommend a particular Flea and Tick control product

Veterinarians

- **Discuss** Heartworms
  - Make your recommendation for year round preventive
  - Recommend a particular product

Inquire and Secure Commitment

“Do you have any questions at this point?”

“Can we count on each other to follow through with this plan?”
Veterinary Technicians or Client Services Specialists

- Support the recommendation
- Remind that heartworm preventive is to be administered every 30 days
- Demonstrate application of flea and tick product
- Flea and tick control is also to be used every 30 days all year round
- Give client your card

Check Out

- Products and medications must be used on schedule to be effective
- Offer to help them remember
  - Cards, Phone call, email, text
  - Who administers medications?
- Tell client when they need to return
- Set up the next appointment
- Ask if the client has any questions
- Hand client a card

Use Your Assets

- Traditional reminders...
  - Post cards, Newsletters
- Electronic reminders
  - email
- Websites
  - Excellent for information if current
  - Requires initiation by client
- Social Media
  - 25% of people with computers do not have Facebook accounts and do not want Facebook!
- Texting?
  - Especially effective with younger folks
• Summary

Convey Entire Practice Team Message to Client

“We really want to work with you to keep your pets healthy and comfortable for as long as possible. Can we work as a team to make sure that happens?”

Explain Plan

“Experts agree that monthly administration of parasite control products do a great job of controlling and preventing parasitic diseases.”

“So all of us at XYZ Veterinary Hospital believe that every dog and cat should be on [Make a specific product recommendation] all year round.”
Help Clients Adhere

“We are all busy people and I know things sometimes get forgotten... Can we decide how best to help your family remember?”

“Who should be reminded? Husband? Wife? Other family member?”

“How can we best nudge that person to remember?”

Ask What They Want and Ask Permission

• Today’s clients are far better connected
• A growing number of folks use social media
  – Make use of blanket reminders and nudges
• Consider calling “just checking”

Help Them Remember

• One primary reason for poor adherence...

• So figure out how best to remind them
  – Management generated reminder cards
  – Email
  – Social media
  – Text
  – Phone calls
Clinical Staff are Ambassadors

- Every member of the clinic staff must understand the seriousness of heartworm infection
- Heartworm disease is preventable
- Clinic staff “practice what they preach”
- Educate and train staff on life cycle, prevention and pathology of heartworms and heartworm disease

Communication is Key

- Explain what you recommend, why you are making that recommendation, and what the ramifications might be if the recommendation is not taken.
- Secure client enrollment
- Help the client comply
  - Recalls
  - Finance options

Tell Them...

“Because we know how important your pet’s health is to you, the doctors and staff always recommend regular physical examinations. Year-round wellness protection facilitates early diagnoses and best treatment results.”
AAHA Parasite Counselor Program

The AAHA Parasite Counselor Program is made up of a series of four modules:

• Module 1: Fleas (available June 1)
• Module 2: Ticks (available June 1)
• Module 3: Heartworms (available Summer 2012)
• Module 4: Internal Parasites (available Summer 2012)

These free, one hour, online modules are designed for all staff of companion animal veterinary practices and can be accessed on-demand.

To register for the program and access the modules, visit:

www.aahanet.org/Education/ParasiteCounselor.aspx

Questions to the Speaker

Please email your questions to webconference@aahanet.org by Sunday, May 20, 2012.

Dr. Paul will provide written responses to all of the questions and they will be posted on AAHA’s website by Friday, June 1, 2012.

Instructions for CE Certificate

1. To complete the evaluation, please go to the following website:

   http://www.keysurvey.com/survey/426978/142c/

2. After completing the evaluation, you will automatically be linked to the Continuing Education Certificate. The CE certificate can only be accessed after the evaluation is completed.

3. Download the CE Certificate (in PDF format) to your computer and print enough copies for those persons viewing the web conference with you.
Thank you for your participation!

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