

I am already seeing mosquitoes in my yard this spring and want to make sure my cat and dog won't get heartworms from a mosquito bite. They used to take Interceptor pills monthly because they could both use the same size pill, but I understand that is not available now. What should I use for them instead?

I commend you on taking such good care of your pets. This unavailability of Interceptor is a big problem for many of our clients who relied on the Novartis products Interceptor or Sentinel for their pets' heartworm prevention. The plant in Lincoln, Nebraska has been temporarily shut down by the FDA. This is in response to problems that were detected in bottles of Excedrin, Bufferin and other Novartis products several months ago. While the FDA is investigating and the company is working to comply with improvements needed at their facility, no Interceptor is being produced or distributed.

Fortunately there are several other possibilities for preventing a potentially deadly heartworm infection in dogs and cats. Discuss these options with your veterinarian as some may have potential side effects or other risks for pets with certain conditions. For your cat, you may want to look into Revolution. It is not a monthly pill, but a topical liquid that you apply to the skin at the base of the neck once a month and it spreads to cover and protect the cat from heartworms, as well as fleas, roundworms, hookworms and ear mites. This is also available for dogs as a heartworm preventive which also controls fleas, Sarcoptic mange, ear mites and one type of tick.

Another monthly oral treatment for heartworms and intestinal worms is Heartgard Plus for dogs and Heartgard for cats. A second choice for a monthly flavored pill for dogs is Trifexis. It has the same ingredient as Interceptor (milbenycin) for heartworm, roundworm, hookworm and whipworm prevention and in addition has a second ingredient, spinosad for flea control.

As you can see there are many products on the market, some are relatively new; some have many years of safety and efficacy data to support them. Always ask your veterinarian to help you make decisions about the best medications for your pets. Don't forget to sign up for automatic monthly email reminders or download an app for your smart phone to help you remember to give them their dose.

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