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'Your Other Family Doctor'

Tick Control with Tick Injections

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What we use for tick injections is not a registered product but a parasiticide for livestock. However, it is the most effective product for tick control. Care must be observed with its use as the dose we require for tick control are at the high end of the safety margin and some dog breeds are sensitive to it. Toxicity reactions are rare but potentially quite serious and generally involve the nervous system. A reaction may show as weakness in the limbs, blindness, twitching or result in a coma. The first time a tick injection or dosage is given we recommended the animal is observed for 24 hours. If no reaction is evident they should be fine with subsequent treatments.

The drug will control Ticks, Hookworm, Roundworms, and some Mites and prevent Heartworm infection. It doesn't have any activity against fleas. It is not recommended for Heartworm positive dogs and a Heartworm test is recommended for any dog that is not on regular Heartworm prevention. If giving tick injections monthly you can rely on this as heartworm prevention. If given irregularly another Heartworm prevention product should be used in conjunction with the injections.

When first starting the injections and induction course of 4 weekly injections is recommended. Maintenance is one a month. Injections are also available orally for convenience allowing you to administer them at home (conditions apply) and prevent needle phobia in your dog.

#### Heartworm Disease

Heartworm disease is a serious and potentially fatal disease in dogs in many parts of the world. It is caused by a worm called *Dirofilaria immitis*. This disease is not spread via dog to dog contact, rather by an intermediate host, the mosquito. As many as 30 species of mosquito can transmit Heartworm. The Heartworm affects the dog when fully developed; the infected larvae enter the blood stream and move to the heart and vesicles around the heart. It is here they grow to maturity over 2-3 months and start reproducing. Heartworm restricts blood flow, which can lead to heart disease.

It takes a number of years before dogs show outward signs on infection. The first sign of Heartworm disease include a soft, dry, chronic cough, shortness of breath, weakness, nervousness, listlessness and loss of stamina. In most cases, diagnosis of Heartworm disease can be made with a blood test that can be run at your clinic. Treatment for Heartworm disease is available, but does involve certain risks, so obviously prevention is better than a cure.

Preventions should be started in puppies by at least 12 weeks of age. Various forms are available including monthly tablets, chews, injections, liquid spot on's or an annual injection. Please feel free to discuss which type of prevention would best suit your pet and lifestyle. Dogs over six months of age which have never been on Heartworm prevention should have a Heartworm test prior to commencing any prevention to avoid any complications.

### **Leptospirosis Australis**

Leptospirosis Australis is a potentially fatal disease in dogs that has been gaining in prevalence in Darwin. As the disease can also be transmitted to humans its prevention has become a significant health issue.

Leptospirosis Australis is a serious bacterial disease that occurs worldwide but more prevalent in tropical regions. Although considered uncommon, Lepto can be fatal and occurs in both domestic and wild animals including dogs (it is considered to be rare in cats).

It affects many parts of the body and, in severe cases, causes liver damage, jaundice, kidney failure and internal bleeding. The infectious organism is spread via contaminated urine, blood and tissue and can survive in water and soil for weeks to months. A vaccination against this particular strain is available for dogs. Two injections four weeks apart are required initially, followed by a booster at six month intervals. Due to the potentially fatal nature of the disease in dogs and the possibility of human infection, we recommend dogs be vaccinated against Leptospirosis Australis.

### **Cane Toad Poisoning**

Cane toads have finally invaded the Territory so vigilance is needed to protect your pet from this introduced pet. Cane toad poison can be lethal in large doses! They are generally more prevalent at night near water sources and wet areas. Regularly checking your yard, trapping and removing them is the best prevention. Alternatively keeping your pet indoors from dusk will help prevent their exposure to them, particularly if your pet is a 'hunter'. When your animal has come into contact with the toads poison the following signs will be apparent: profuse salivation, head shaking and pawing at the mouth. Most people see their pets playing with the toad, most dogs/cats mouth or lick the toad instead of swallowing it. If they have eaten the toad CALL OR TAKE YOUR PET TO THE VET IMMEDIATELY!

If your dog or cat is showing the above mentioned signs you should immediately start washing its mouth out with the hose (on slow, don't choke the animal) and rubbing its gums with a cloth. If a hose is not available then use a wet cloth but continually rinse it out. This should continue for 20-30 minutes as this may be the key to saving your dog's life. If in the case your dog has collapsed or is having a seizure/vomiting this means they have absorbed high amounts of the toad poison and you must get your dog to the vet immediately.

In some cases your animal may be showing some of the above mentioned signs but you never saw them with the toad. There are many different toxins that can cause the above reactions in this case contact the vet for first aid advice.