

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) labeling on heartworm preventives states that the medication is to be used by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian. This means heartworm preventives must be purchased from your veterinarian or with a prescription through a pet pharmacy. Prior to prescribing a heartworm preventive, a valid veterinarian/client/patient relationship must exist (the veterinarian must have seen/examined the pet within the past year and has appropriate knowledge of the pet), and the veterinarian typically performs a heartworm test to make sure your pet doesn't already have adult heartworms, as giving preventives can lead to rare but possibly severe reactions that could be harmful or even fatal. It is not necessary to test very young puppies or kittens prior to starting preventives since it takes approximately 6 months for heartworms to develop to adulthood. If the heartworm testing is negative, prevention medication is prescribed.