

# WORDS THAT WORK SERIES

## HEARTWORM PREVENTION

### VIDEO SCRIPT



Veterinarians were once a client's sole source of knowledge. That isn't the case today. Pet owners now have access to a vast amount of information from many different sources. Unfortunately, not all of these sources are reliable, and clients often come to us full of misinformation.

Regardless of what information clients bring to us, take it as an opportunity to listen, to acknowledge their opinions, and then educate them on what's best for their pet. Our words and our actions can mean the difference – if pet owners don't understand the benefit of our recommendations, they'll be less likely to provide their pet with the care we recommend.

Keep this in mind when watching the video, and listen for the words we use to discuss heartworm prevention. The purpose of this video is to demonstrate some specific techniques that you can use to communicate more effectively with your clients.

■ Veterinarian ■ Client

I can see you have done a fair amount of research into heartworm disease and that you have questions about the need for prevention. Would you be open to telling me more about your thoughts on this?

Sure. I've just been talking to some of my neighbors because one of them has decided not to give their dog heartworm medication – they said that the risk of a dog getting heartworms in our area is low and since Sadie isn't outside all of the time, it makes me wonder if she really needs it.

I think it is great that you are thinking about this, and ultimately it is your decision whether Sadie is on heartworm prevention. I'd like to share some recent research about heartworm disease in our area before you make any decisions. Is that okay?

Sure.

#### COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

- Acknowledge and explore the client's perspective
- Praise the client's research efforts
- Respect the client's right to choose
- Invite the client to learn more

■ Veterinarian ■ Client

I know you mentioned heartworm disease is rare in this area, but a report on heartworm disease found the level in our area to be higher than people often think. This means Sadie is at risk. The important thing to recognize with heartworm disease is that it can be fatal. There is a treatment, but it has risks and is quite expensive. Prevention is the safest and easiest way to deal with heartworm disease. Many heartworm preventives also provide protection against internal parasites like roundworms, whipworms, and hookworms. This is important because these are harmful to your pet and some can also be harmful to people, especially children.

What are your thoughts?

I'm not sure. This is a lot to take in.

Would it be helpful for me to share with you how heartworm disease occurs and how Sadie might get it?

Sure. Do you have something I can take home to read?

Yes. I'll grab a handout for you before we finish, which also includes more information on the research I mentioned. Just to clarify, we'd want her to receive prevention year-round. I understand this is different from the information you came in with. What other questions can I answer for you?

I'm okay at the moment – I just need a few minutes to think this through.

Not a problem – take your time. I know this is a lot to think about. I'll go and get the information on heartworm and the other intestinal parasites we discussed, then come back in a few minutes, at which time I can also give you an estimate of the cost. If you have any questions before I step out, I would be happy to answer them.

Okay.

*This video has demonstrated how to communicate the value and benefit of preventive healthcare and how to build stronger relationships with your clients.*

*The script for this video is available from the Partners for Healthy Pets website and is provided as a guide to help you use Words That Work.*

## COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

- Provide information slowly; take pauses
- Explain concerns
- Make clear, concise recommendations
  
- Don't overwhelm the client with information
  
- Use handouts to provide take-home information
- Be supportive
- Empathize
- Encourage questions