



How to Dispense More Preventatives In-Clinic

by Wendy S. Myers, CVJ

Dog owners are skipping parasite protection entirely or buying from outside sources, with 58% not getting parasiticides from veterinarians. Nearly 40% of clients believe their dogs and cats are not at risk of getting heartworms and 30% admitted they don't give their pets preventatives. When clients visit for appointments, face-to-face conversations let you educate them about prevalence, products, and benefits of protection.

Here are eight ways to dispense more preventatives in-clinic:

1. Set expectations at check-in.

When clients arrive, client service representatives (CSRs) should confirm their contact information for future reminders and communicate if refills are needed. Say,

"Hello, <client name> and <pet name>. Thanks for completing your wellness form, which the doctor and technician have reviewed and will ask you follow-up questions. Let's confirm your contact information to ensure you get future reminders about upcoming care. Is the best email to reach you <client email>? Is your cell phone <client phone>? Is your address <client address>? I see that <pet name> is due for preventative refills to protect from fleas, ticks, heartworms, and intestinal parasites. The technician will share rebates so you can save the most today. I will let Dr. <Name> and the technician know that you've arrived."

This script praises the client for completing an online health form in advance, which saves your medical team 10 to 15 minutes of history taking per appointment. Doctors and technicians will ask follow-up questions based on clients' answers. For example, your online wellness form should ask, "Which flea/tick and heartworm disease preventative do you give, and when did you give the last dose?" If the client noted that the last dose was given three months ago, medical staff will educate the pet owner about the importance of consistent monthly doses.

2. Display nonverbal conversation starters in exam rooms.

Because the exam room is your classroom, create a learning environment. Each exam room needs the same teaching tools, including models, slideshows, posters, prevalence maps, and product displays.

Use these conversation starters about parasite protection:

- **Product displays:** Install floating shelves that feature your preferred brands of flea/tick and heartworm disease preventatives for dogs and cats. Display empty boxes to avoid theft. Use double-sided tape or mounting putty so boxes stay put.
- **Prevalence maps:** Reverse clients' misperceptions of "not in my neighborhood" with prevalence maps from the Companion Animal Parasite Council (<https://capcvet.org/maps/#/>). In Minnesota, 1 in 20 dogs tested positive for Lyme disease this year. In 2025, 1 in 30 dogs in Texas tested positive for heartworm disease.
- **Slideshows:** Waiting time is learning time. While a heartworm/tick test is processing, have the client watch a slideshow about parasite prevalence and protection. Create your own slideshow with local data and hospital branding. The American Heartworm Society also offers downloadable slideshows (<https://heartwormsociety.org/resources/69-slide-shows>). Slideshows can play on exam computers, tablets, or digital photo frames. Technicians will say,

"We collected <pet name>'s blood sample for the heartworm/tick test, which I will run now. We will have results in __ minutes. Please watch this brief slideshow about parasite protection. When I return with test results, I will answer your questions and discuss the best preventative medication for <pet name>."

3. Check purchase history.

Before greeting the client in the exam room, the technician will review the electronic medical record to see when preventatives were last purchased, how many doses were sold, and whether the pet owner may be splitting a box among multiple dogs. Check for other medications that may need refills, too.

4. Have technicians preview services at the beginning of appointments.

Explain professional services and products that will be delivered during today's wellness appointment. This lets clients ask questions about medical services or fees. Say,

"Hello, <client name> and <pet name>. I'm <name>, the technician who will assist Dr. <Name>. <Pet name> needs an exam and vaccines for distemper/parvo, rabies, Bordetella, leptospirosis, and Lyme disease. We will test for intestinal parasites and heartworm/tick diseases. <Pet name> needs a refill of flea/tick and heartworm disease preventatives. Thanks for completing your online wellness form, which I have reviewed and will ask you follow-up questions. I also will get your pet's vital signs, and then Dr. <Name> will join us. Does <pet name> have any health or behavior concerns that you want to discuss with the doctor?"

Use the action word of "needs" when discussing services and products rather than the wobble word of "recommend." Explain testing for heartworm/tick diseases to renew the prescription for preventatives and get a refill today. Asking about health or behavior concerns upfront will avoid blindsiding the doctor with, "Could you also check...?" at the end of the visit.

Previewing services and products invites pet owners to express financial concerns before you deliver care. If clients ask, "How much will everything cost?" be transparent about fees. Create a treatment plan with the services and products and review it with the client. Don't let the client cross out services before seeing the veterinarian. Say,

"Let me review the medical services and fees with you. Before deciding, let's have the doctor perform the exam, and then he/she will help you prioritize which services and products your pet will need."

If the client missed three months of preventative dosing, the doctor would prioritize a heartworm/tick test in today's services.

If clients don't inquire about fees, ask a clarifying question:

"Do you have any questions before we perform these services, or shall we get started?"

5. Discuss parasite protection in exam rooms.

It's not just what you say, it's where you say it. Veterinarians and technicians need to communicate that flea/tick and heartworm disease preventatives are medically necessary while in exam rooms. Don't leave medication conversations up to CSRs at checkout. When clients exit exam rooms, they have mentally checked out and may dismiss CSRs' attempts to sell products.

6. Don't ask—tell clients when they need refills.

Asking, "Do you need any refills today?" could leave pets unprotected. The medical record tells you purchase history and when refills will be due. Say,

"<Pet name> has one dose left of <brand> for flea/tick and heartworm disease protection. Let me tell you about our instant rebates so you may save the most."

7. Offer 12 doses first.

This reinforces your standard of care for year-round protection. If clients can't meet the expense of 12 doses, offer six today and autoship the next refill of six doses through your online pharmacy. If clients can only afford single doses, set up EasyDoseIt!™, which provides monthly delivery of single doses with free shipping through your Midwest Veterinary Supply online pharmacy (www.midwestvetsupply.com/wps/portal/c/practice-solutions/mvso).



8. Dispense medication in exam rooms.

Deliver preventatives in exam rooms so clients understand the product is medication. Technicians will explain when and how to give preventatives and set up monthly dosing reminders through your practice information management software or third-party client communication platform.

When you take a strategic approach to improving in-clinic preventative dispensing, your team will protect more pets and grow revenue.

Best known as the "Queen of Scripts," Wendy Myers knows the right words will lead clients to accept your medical advice, driving patient and practice health. As founder of Communication Solutions for Veterinarians, she teaches practical skills through online courses, conferences, and onsite consulting. Wendy's experience as a partner in a specialty and emergency hospital helped her understand issues that owners and managers face. Learn how Wendy can train your team at csvetscourses.com.

