

Lyme Disease

How It Can Affect Your Pets Health

By Dr. Leah Garlan

Lyme disease is not only affecting humans, but their pets as well. I am currently treating my dog for Lyme disease after discovering she had all the classic symptoms. I first noticed that she was depressed and not acting like herself. She's a two-year-old German shepherd who is very active, so when she began isolating herself from the other dogs, I knew something wasn't right. She began yelping when she got up after lying for long periods of time and she was sore all over. My instinct told me this was not just a hip or sore leg problem. I made an appointment with my veterinarian who evaluated her and took an initial blood test, which was positive for Lyme disease. She was very uncomfortable when she flexed her joints and was also was running a high fever.

Without treatment, Lyme disease causes problems in many parts of the dog's body, including the heart, kidneys, and joints. On rare occasions, it can lead to neurological disorders. Lyme disease most commonly is associated with symptoms such as a high fever, swollen lymph nodes, lameness, and a loss of appetite. Owners will describe the lameness as moving around to different legs and they can't tell if it's the front or the back.

Transmission or Cause

Lyme disease is caused by *Borrelia Burgdorferi*, which is passed to dogs and people by deer ticks carrying the infection. The only way a tick can transmit the bacteria is to remain attached to the animals skin for one to two days. Unfortunately, these ticks are very small and can easily go unnoticed. It is very important to check your dog for ticks after they are outside, especially in wooded or high grass areas. The ticks will vary in size depending on how long they have been on the dog.

Treatment

Treatment involves the use of an appropriate antibiotic, such as Doxycycline, for at least three to four weeks. There are other forms of alternative treatment which can also aid in your dog's recovery such as chiropractic, acupuncture and cold laser therapy. I have also used flax seed oil and supplements for joint and body support.

Prognosis

Dogs should begin to show signs of recovery two to three days after beginning the antibiotics. However, the disease may recur within a few weeks or months. In these cases, the dog will need to return to antibiotic therapy for extended periods. Most dogs will respond very well to treatment and have no permanent signs of the disease.

Prevention

Prevention is the best way to avoid Lyme disease. Check your dog regularly and remove ticks. There are also vaccinations for Lyme disease and the use of Frontline for flea and tick prevention can be administered. Each preventative measure has its advantages and disadvantages. Consult with your veterinarian to seek the appropriate treatments for your dog.

Dr. Leah Garlan is the owner of the Penridge Wellness Center in Blooming Glen, PA. She practices as a Chiropractor and an Acupuncturist while specializing in Chiropractic and Alternative Care for animals. Dr. Leah enjoys combining the science, art and philosophy of Chiropractic with the ancient wisdom of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture.

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