

LYME DISEASE

Lyme disease is a serious concern in our area. Here is a summary of the disease, and how to manage prevention and treatment.

Lyme disease is caused by a bacteria carried by deer ticks. Not all deer ticks carry this bacteria. Of the dogs infected by the bacteria few (less than 5%) will develop symptoms. The main symptoms are fever and joint pain/arthritis. Other symptoms could include weakness, poor appetite, depression and rarely kidney disease. Testing is done with a simple blood test. If signs do occur an antibiotic is used for treatment. The following information should be helpful if you are considering Lyme vaccination of your dog.

PREVENTION

Lyme vaccination of negative dogs and tick protection is the best way to prevent Lyme disease.

Exposure to ticks, time spent outdoors, hunting, and living or spending time in rural areas are all important risk factors.

Testing for Lyme disease is recommended before vaccination.

Testing and vaccination of young dogs before tick exposure should be considered.

Lyme disease does not affect cats.

INFECTED DOGS

Dogs that are Lyme positive but without symptoms should be monitored only. Most infected dogs do not show signs of disease. There is no known benefit to vaccinating dogs that are already infected and it does not help fight the disease.

Kidney disease caused by lyme disease is very rare but fatal. It does not respond to antibiotics or vaccination.

Dogs with positive lyme tests are persistently infected for life. Future Lyme tests will remain positive.

TREATMENT

Dogs that have symptoms and a positive Lyme test should be treated with doxycycline. While good for treating symptoms doxycycline cannot eliminate infection.

Giving antibiotics to positive dogs without symptoms is not generally helpful. Be aware that other diseases can mimic Lyme symptoms. Additional tests or radiographs may be advised.

SIDE EFFECTS

Potential side effects of Lyme vaccine could include soreness, joint pain, fever depression, poor appetite or allergic reactions.