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Lyme Diseases

Ticks are very prevalent in the Northwest PA/Northeast OH area. And with ticks come tick-borne diseases, such as Lyme disease! What does Lyme disease look like in dogs, and is there a way to prevent it?

A Tick-y Situation

Lyme disease is spread by ticks, most commonly the deer tick (or the black-legged tick). A tick must bite a dog for at least 24 hours before the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi* can transfer from the tick to the dog. Once inside the dog, the disease tends to replicate in the joints as well as in the kidneys. Common clinical signs of Lyme disease in dogs include lameness (typically shifting-leg lameness), joint pain, fever, lethargy, and anorexia. A less common form of Lyme disease can also cause kidney failure in dogs, which is often fatal.

Lyme disease is often first diagnosed using a 4DX test, which helps detect antibodies for Lyme disease in the bloodstream. However, this does not say if there is an active infection in your dog. Therefore, further testing is often performed. This includes a Quant C6 test, which is a blood test that puts a number to the amount of antibodies in the bloodstream, as well as a urinalysis, which looks at protein concentrations in the urine and monitors for signs of kidney involvement.

Treatment and Prevention

Treatment for Lyme disease is often a month-long course of antibiotics. Anti-inflammatories are often prescribed for dogs with joint pain. Dogs with Lyme-related kidney disease are often treated with IV fluids, a special diet, and several other medications, including medications to help with nausea, etc.

There are several ways to prevent Lyme disease. A Lyme vaccine does exist, which helps build up antibodies in your pet's system against the bacteria. There are also multiple flea and tick products to help either repel ticks and/or kill ticks when they attach. If your pet goes in grassy or forested areas frequently, check your pet for ticks that may have attached. Products like Tick Twisters exist to help you remove ticks off your pet safely. If you have more questions about Lyme disease, make sure to talk to your veterinarian!



If you have any further questions about any of these diseases, or if you want your dog tested for heartworm, lyme, ehrlichia, and anaplasmosis, give us a call!

Best regards,
Rachel Rielinger, DVM



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