

Lyme Disease Fact Sheet



Dogs & Cats

- Lyme disease, a bacterial infection caused by *Borrelia burgdorferi*, is transferred by black-legged ticks (also known as deer ticks) in the eastern United States and in the western United States. Lyme disease has been found and diagnosed in all 50 of the United States.
- There is no credible evidence that Lyme disease can be transmitted through air, food, water, or from the bites of mosquitoes, flies, fleas, or lice. While Lyme Disease is NOT known to be transmitted by other common ticks in the US such as Lone star ticks (*Amblyomma americanum*), the American dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*), the Rocky Mountain wood tick (*Dermacentor andersoni*), and the brown dog tick (*Rhipicephalus sanguineus*), these ticks can be vectors of other serious tick borne diseases in both animals and humans.
- Lyme disease vaccination in dogs is very effective, particularly for at-risk dogs in endemic areas. Although all dogs are susceptible, the lifestyle of some dogs may make them more prone to disease. Talk to your veterinarian to see if Lyme disease vaccination would be recommended for your dog.
- Antibodies to Lyme disease may be found in cats, but infection, if it occurs at all, is poorly understood. There is no recommended testing, treatment, or follow-up guidelines for felines, highlighting the importance of tick prevention.
- Prevention of tick-borne disease is much more important than treatment. There are several topical medications available from your veterinarian which may kill and/or repel ticks and other parasites. Further, there are tick collars and now an oral medication that may also be utilized. In addition, checking your pet regularly for ticks is paramount for complete protection.

Horses

- Testing for Lyme disease in horses is tricky since many horses have been exposed to the disease, yet only a few are truly infected. Recently, newer tests have been developed that help determine infection from exposure.
- The most common clinical signs of Lyme disease in horses may include any of the following: shifting leg lameness, poor performance, weight loss, low grade fever, sensitivity to touch (known as “hyperesthesia”), and loss of muscle along the topline and gluteal muscles.
- Less commonly, Lyme disease can affect the horse’s nervous system, causing the horse to become unstable (“ataxic”), unable to eat and/or depressed, just to name of few of the symptoms.
- Uveitis (inflammation of the middle portion of the eye) can be another uncommon but serious symptom of Lyme disease. It will typically affect both eyes.
- Tick prevention—daily checks of your horse and manual removal of ticks is most effective prevention. In addition, frequent use of permethrin or pyrethrin-containing fly sprays, or spot-on treatments made for horses can be effective. Check with your veterinarian to find out what’s best for your horse.



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