

## Facts About Lyme Disease



Because Lyme ticks are much smaller than wood ticks and brown dog ticks they are much harder to detect in your dog's coat

### How Lyme Disease is Transmitted

Lyme Disease is the result of a bacterial organism transmitted by ticks. Not all ticks carry the bacteria responsible for Lyme, but because of the high incidence of Lyme Disease in Wisconsin, Southern Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Minnesota, a cautious approach to all ticks is probably wise.

As the Lyme carrying tick attaches to you or your dog, the Lyme organism migrates from the intestinal tract of the tick to the mouth parts of the tick ... and then into you or your dog. It's believed that this process of passing the disease *MAY* take more than 12 hours. The primary transmission of the disease is from the bite of an adult tick; young nymph ticks can also transmit the disease.

No evidence supports transmission from person to person or from dog to dog. Once the tick begins to feed on a host it continues to feed until satisfied and then it falls off. That's why it's believed to be unlikely that any tick brought into the house on your dog will bite YOU after having bitten your dog.

### Signs and Symptoms of Lyme Disease

In Humans - Common symptoms of the disease can include aches, joint pain, fever, loss of appetite, swollen lymph nodes, and perhaps a bulls-eye rash at the site of the bite. With antibiotics, treatment at the early stages is highly successful. However, long term and serious complications CAN result from undiagnosed and untreated Lyme Disease, including degenerative arthritis, neurological dysfunction and cardiac problems.



In Dogs - The most common signs of Lyme Disease in dogs are the same as the most common signs in humans: joint pain, fever, loss of appetite, and swollen lymph nodes. Lameness is common. Dogs rarely get the bulls-eye rash common in some people. With antibiotic treatment, most dogs recover completely.



### General Precautions

From April - November, avoid areas in which deer ticks are abundant; if you can't avoid those areas, wear protective clothing

such as long pants tucked into socks; consider the use of tick repellents *being sure to follow label directions on which products are safe to use on clothing and which may be used on the skin*; and most important: check yourself, your children and your pets daily for ticks.

### Products for Your Pet

Daily combing with a flea comb (which will help you find ticks that may be feeding on your dog) is without question your best defense. There are also monthly topicals for your dog that will kill a tick that has bitten your dog. Ask your veterinarian which tick prevention product may be right for your dog.

### If You Find a Tick or Suspect You Have Been Bitten

Ticks are best removed by grasping gently with tweezers as close to the skin as possible, then gently pulling backward. DO NOT apply Vaseline, nail polish, etc., to the tick prior to removal. Save suspicious ticks for identification in a jar or bag with a blade of grass.

If you know or suspect you have been bitten by a tick, call your doctor. In particular, pregnant or nursing women should seek PROMPT medical attention if they even *suspect* they've been bitten.

## To Vaccinate or Not To Vaccinate

### In Humans -

The best advice is always to consult with your personal physician and decide whether vaccination is right for you. *As a guideline, follow the general recommendations of the CDC as of June, 1999:*

### In Dogs

This is a controversial subject, with no clear consensus of opinion. Those who recommend using the vaccine point out that it is largely safe and effective. Those who recommend against the vaccine argue that it's unwarranted because adverse reactions to the vaccination have been reported, including the development of Lyme Disease itself. Effectiveness of the vaccine is also in question with estimates between 50% to 85% successful immunization. Additionally, an April/93 Cornell University Newsletter item documented a study of dogs with a clear history and diagnosis of Lymes. Through testing they proved that more than half had Lyme disease because of the vaccine used, and almost a third had Lymes, despite the vaccine. In past years, many vets recommended against vaccination because a blood test for Lyme's in vaccinated dogs resulted in false positives. However, improved blood tests now are more accurate in determining if your dog was exposed to the disease or the positive findings were a result of the vaccination. All agree, however, that the best line of defense against Lyme's disease is preventing the Lyme's tick from attaching to your dog for more than 12 hours. Because topical flea and tick medications kill the tick before the 12 hour transmission time has elapsed, these medications appear to provide the best protection against Lyme's disease. Consult with your veterinarian and decide for yourself whether the vaccine may be right for your dog.

