

Lyme Disease

Lyme disease and Dogs

Lyme disease is caused by a bacteria transmitted to your dog from ticks carrying the organism. The yearly heartworm test we offer also tests for antibodies to the Lyme bacteria. The antibodies formed by natural exposure may or may not protect your dog from clinical symptoms of the disease. Also, because these antibodies persist in the blood for several years, we cannot tell if they have been formed due to a recent exposure or one in the past. Your dog may develop symptoms from five weeks up to months after an exposure.

What we recommend:

1. Reduce the exposure risk by using tick control products. Ticks must feed on your dog for more than 48 hours to effectively transfer the bacteria. Topically applied insecticides like Frontline Plus, Advantix, and others usually kill ticks before the disease can be transmitted.
2. Vaccinate your dog for Lyme disease.

Options we offer if your dog tests positive for exposure:

1. Monitor your dog for any symptoms of Lyme disease. This may include lameness, fever, lethargy, and decreased appetite. If you notice anything out of the ordinary, please call us to discuss the appropriate course of action. In rare cases, kidney disease develops as a result of exposure to Lyme disease, and symptoms may include decreased appetite, weight loss, and increased thirst and urination. We recommend monitoring your dog's kidney function by analyzing a urine specimen once a year. We perform a urinalysis, microscopic sediment exam, and E.R.D. test (Early Renal Damage). This testing costs about \$50.
2. Treat your dog for Lyme disease. This involves a 30-day course of an antibiotic called doxycycline. Treatment cost varies, depending on the size of the dog, but is about \$60 for the average-size dog. Antibiotic treatment usually causes symptoms to improve, but does not eliminate or "cure" the infection.
3. Perform an additional blood test. By sending another blood sample to a separate laboratory, a Quantitative C6 test can help us differentiate between exposure and true infection. If the test indicates only *exposure* to Lyme disease, then you can safely continue to monitor your dog. If the test indicates *infection* with Lyme disease, then the treatment mentioned above is started. This test costs \$135.