

## **Lyme Disease**

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### **Overview**

Lyme disease is a bacterial disease caused by a microscopic organism, the spirochete, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, and is spread by ticks. The bacteria normally feed on small mammals, especially mice. Ticks then feed on the mammals and carry the bacteria to their victims. The deer tick is the most common tick involved in spreading the disease, although other ticks can pass it along, too. Ticks capable of spreading Lyme disease are most commonly found in the eastern United States, the upper Midwest and the Pacific Northwest. Lyme disease can affect different organs and body systems. The disease is named because of the initial discovery in human beings that occurred in 1975 in Lyme, Connecticut.

Lyme disease is most common in dogs but has been reported in other species. There appears to be no breed or sex predisposition. Outside, hunting and working dogs are more likely to be exposed to ticks than dogs kept indoors. Puppies appear to have a higher risk, and it is thought that less than five percent of dogs exposed to Lyme disease in an endemic (prone) area may develop clinical signs.

### **Diagnosis and Treatment Notes:**

- Lyme disease is generally diagnosed by blood tests for Lyme disease titers or a Western blot blood test. Analysis of joint fluid may also be done to rule out other causes of lameness.
- Treatment depends on the severity of the disease, your individual pet, and your veterinarian. Lyme disease is treated with antibiotics such as tetracycline, doxycycline, cephalexin or amoxicillin. Antibiotics are typically continued for up to 4 weeks. Discuss treatment details when your pet is diagnosed with this condition.

### **What to Watch for\*:**

- Recurrent lameness in a joint with complete recovery
- Reluctance to move (pain)
- Swelling in one or more joints
- Anorexia
- Fever
- Lethargy

*\*Please notify us if you notice any of the above signs or if you have any questions!*