

Your dog has tested positive for lyme disease. Now what?

Lyme disease is a bacteria transmitted to animals by the bite of ticks. Most dogs who get infected with lyme disease are asymptomatic, meaning they don't show any clinical signs. The great majority of these dogs (90-95%) never have any problems with the disease, and if they do show symptoms (discussed below) they usually resolve with a course of antibiotics. Whether or not to treat the asymptomatic dogs with antibiotics is controversial because we don't have complete research on the course of the disease long term. Veterinarians at East Greenbush Animal Hospital do recommend treating these patients. However, treating with antibiotics does not cure the disease; it can lay dormant in tissues and become active again later. Most importantly, a positive test result means that there are ticks with lyme disease on YOUR property or where your dog travels, so be very careful about getting ticks on yourself. Check yourself after spending time outdoors, remove ticks immediately, save them, and consider calling your doctor if you do remove a deer tick. Humans who are exposed to lyme disease and are treated with appropriate antibiotics within 72 hours of infected tick exposure will probably not contract the disease. People cannot get lyme disease from dogs, you must be bitten by a deer tick. **MAKE SURE YOU HAVE SAFE AND EFFECTIVE TICK CONTROL ON YOUR DOG.**

The most common signs of lyme disease in dogs include any of the following: lethargy, limping, swollen joints, fever, not eating and, rarely, it can also cause kidney disease. Some dogs who develop kidney disease from lyme become severely ill and die. Recent research has shown that some dogs may have very early kidney disease from lyme disease and appear clinically normal at first, but may become ill in the future. We don't know yet the time frame of disease progression and we don't know which dogs will become clinically ill.

We recommend that your lyme positive dog's urine be tested to establish the status of his/her kidney function. If we do find that your dog's kidneys are compromised, we can discuss the options available to try to slow disease progression. If you are interested in knowing if your dog's kidneys are affected by the lyme disease, please bring in a fresh urine sample in a clean container (it can be refrigerated for a short period of time before being dropped off), or make an appointment for us to collect one. The urine sample will be sent to a lab and we will call you with results in a few days. Estimated cost of these initial tests is about \$70. Further testing, medication/diet change, or future monitoring may also be offered based on the results of these preliminary tests and we will discuss costs of each.

Lyme specialists are recommending that lyme positive dog's urine be tested 2-4 times a year for the life of the dog so that we try to catch any disease process early. How often we check your dog's urine is up to you, but please consider having it checked at least once a year.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call us.