

Health Bulletin



Avoiding Lyme Disease

(NAPSA)—It may surprise some people to learn that your pet's health could provide insight into your risk of infection.

The American Lyme Disease Foundation reports that Lyme disease in dogs is an indicator of increased risk for infection in their owners. The group recommends annual testing of dogs to help keep them and their owners healthy.

Lyme disease is a condition caused by the bacteria that live on the deer tick. The bacteria can spread to humans (or other hosts) when ticks bite them. Symptoms of the disease in humans include a "bull's-eye-shaped" rash and flu-like symptoms including headache, sore throat, stiff neck, fever, muscle aches, fatigue and general malaise.

Cases of Lyme disease tend to be most prevalent in the spring, but numerous variables factor in to when people and dogs are most vulnerable to the disease and how many contract it each year.

"Ticks need a bit of humidity to be active," says David Weld of the American Lyme Disease Foundation. "A couple of years ago we had a rainy summer. While that's ideal for ticks, it kept people out of the woods and other places where ticks tend to be."

Weld says while variables make it difficult to predict when Lyme disease outbreaks will occur, it is known that the disease affects people throughout the U.S. Perhaps even more alarming,



Lyme disease can be treated, especially when detected early.

Weld says the incidence of human Lyme disease is believed to be as much as 10 times greater than the number of cases reported. However, dogs are at a greater risk of contracting the disease than are humans.

Symptoms of Lyme disease in dogs include:

- Sudden occurrence of lameness
- Seeming reluctance to move or a stiff, painful gait
- Warm, swollen joints
- Pain in the legs and throughout the body
- Fever, fatigue and loss of appetite
- Swollen lymph nodes

If you notice these symptoms in your four-legged friend, it's a good idea to have your dog—and yourself—screened for Lyme disease. For more information, visit www.lymetest.com.