



**PRESS RELEASE**  
**June 4, 2015**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Lyme: A Serious, But Preventable, Disease in Dogs**

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Lyme disease is a very serious concern for people and pets. It is carried by deer ticks which emerge in the spring, remain pretty active during the summer months, and then go through a burst of activity in the fall. While we think of dogs who spend time in the woods or playing in grasslands becoming exposed to deer ticks, they can be present in your backyard lawn, too. (Cats can become infected and form antibodies to Lyme, but clinical signs -if they occur at all -are extremely rare.)

Dogs can become infected with Lyme in less than 24 hours after a deer tick attaches to them for a blood meal. Since the immature (nymph) form of the deer tick can transmit Lyme and is tiny - the size of the head of a pin - it is important to do everything you can to prevent these ticks from attaching to your pet. By the time the tick is swollen with blood and you find it, it is likely it has already been there long enough to transmit Lyme disease.

If your pet becomes infected by this disease, the initial symptoms can be mild and easily overlooked. The most common sign of Lyme disease in a dog is limping or lameness. This means the Lyme disease organism has already made it to the joints and is causing arthritis. Some dog owners may also notice painful joints, a lack of appetite, fatigue and fever. In the early stages, a diagnosis can be difficult to make based on clinical signs. Rarely, Lyme can settle in the kidneys - without the classic limping that we associate with Lyme - and cause kidney failure and death.

Treatment within the first few weeks is very effective and almost always results in a decrease of symptoms. It is unlikely that your dog will ever be completely

cured, as flare-ups can occur in the future. If Lyme affects the kidneys, it is rarely cured and almost always results in death of the dog. Since we can't predict which of the two Lyme will affect, prevention is key.

Prevention is simple and inexpensive. One of the best ways to prevent transmission is to check your pets over very carefully after outdoor activity and remove any ticks before they become swollen with blood. If you find a tick, wear gloves and tweezers to remove it. Grasp as closely as you can to the skin and pull straight out. Tick removers are also available at your veterinarian's or local pet store. Remember, ticks cannot jump or fly: they only attach after direct contact with your dog. Usually they are found around the head and neck, but can attach anywhere.

There are many options now for tick (and flea) control for your dogs. Most of us are familiar with the topical liquids that are applied to the skin on the back of your dog's neck. Recently, oral medications have arrived on the market that can prevent fleas and ticks for up to three months. These work well for those dogs who have skin reactions with the topical preventatives. They also work for owners or who don't like the topicals or can't remember to apply them. There are also some collars available for prevention.

It is important to remember that one product is not 'best' for all dogs. Talk with your veterinarian who can provide you with guidance based on your dog's medical history and lifestyle. For instance if your dog is a frequent swimmer, a topical or collar may not be the best option, as some products lose their efficacy after water exposure. It is important that you talk with your veterinarian if you are considering buying a product online or over the counter. There are many products out there that do not work, regardless of the claims on the website/package. Before you buy these products, write down the name and active ingredient of the product and have it available when you consult your veterinarian.

Also, we now have highly effective vaccines that will prevent Lyme disease in dogs. Certain Lyme vaccines actually block the transmission of the disease from the tick to the dog. These vaccines are recommended for all dogs exposed to deer ticks.

Medications to prevent ticks from attaching, checking your pets frequently in case they have, and vaccination can save your pet from useless suffering. Ask your veterinarian for more information on prevention of ticks and Lyme disease or visit [www.vtvets.org](http://www.vtvets.org).

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*The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA), founded in 1898, is a professional organization of 340 veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine.*