

## **Lyme Disease (First of Several on this Subject)**

**In my previous column, I discussed 10 symptoms which might require investigation in relation to your pets wellness. Several of these symptoms occur in a disease which is frequently diagnosed in our clinic and which is endemic to our geographic area. This disease also affects people and is caused by a bacteria called borrellia burgoghi, commonly know as lyme disease.**

**The first symptom you might notice is loss of mobility or stiffness. Sometimes one or more limbs are lame intermittently or chronically. You might notice difficulty climbing stairs, lethargy or decreased appetite.**

**If you have a pet and walk by seashore vegetation, the woods or even allow your pet to roam in your backyard, you and your pets are vulnerable to ticks. Recently, on a drive to Essex several months ago, a passenger got out of the car, brushed up against some weeds, and was literally covered with ticks! These almost microscopic creatures can carry three different disease entities: Lyme Disease, Anaplasmosis and Erlichiosis.**

**Ticks are more prevalent during the warmer months, however, they are still a threat this time of year. Symptoms from exposure may not show up for months, so it is imperative to be on guard all year.**

**There is a bit of a controversy about the prevention of this disease and there are antidotal thereories surrounding the Vaccination against Lyme disease.**

**We must all consider the choices we make in the selection of drugs which we take and administer to our pets. I highly advocate education in these selections. However, I believe it is in your canine pet's best interest to Vaccinate against this disease.**

**It has been heartbreaking to see young dogs affected by this disease who have gone unvaccinated. Sometimes, dog breeders advise against the vaccination because they honestly believe the vaccination represents a particular threat to their favorite breed. I have researched this, talked to veterinarians who care for breeders dogs, and the best I have come up with is a compliance to their clients wishes, but no evidence to indicate that vaccination is not a wise practice.**

**There are several other methods of prevention which I recommend for any pet who is exposed to ticks. The two products that can be employed are a topical medication which kills ticks (and fleas) and a collar that kills ticks. In heavily infected areas I recommend both. The quality products can be obtained from your veterinarian or from discount pet product suppliers on the internet.**

**In addition to attempting to prevent the disease, pets should have a Tick Panel Blood Test done once or twice a year. Unfortunately, even good preventive measures can not guarantee freedom from these three tick borne diseases. If the disease(s) are diagnosed early they can be successfully treated with antibiotics.**

**The diagnosis of Lyme Disease has advanced in recent years. Most veterinarians can perform a test for common tick born disease in their own in-house laboratory. The symptoms can mimic other diseases like osteoarthritis, hip displasia, and several other diseases. The blood test is non invasive and can prevent the disease from causing profound changes in joints and other organ sytems.**

**Your veterinarian can determine if he or she believes active disease is present and discuss treatment options.**