



Always consult with a veterinarian that you feel comfortable with before diagnosing or treating any disease on your own. This information is for reference only.

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## Pythiosis

### Issue Description

*Pythiosis is caused by Pythium insidiosum and occurs most commonly in dogs and horses, but is also found in cats, cattle, and humans. The disease is typically found in young, large breed dogs. Pythium occupies swamps in late summer and infects dogs who drink water containing it. Pythium insidiosum is different from other members of the genus in that human and horse hair, skin, and decaying animal and plant tissue are chemoattractants for its zoospores.*

*Pythiosis occurs in areas with mild winters because the organism survives in standing water that does not reach freezing temperatures. In the United States it is most commonly found in the Gulf states, especially Louisiana, but has also been found in midwest and eastern states. It is also found in southeast Asia, eastern Australia, New Zealand, and South America.*

*It is suspected that pythiosis is caused by invasion of the organism into wounds, either in the skin or in the gastrointestinal tract. The disease grows slowly in the stomach and small intestine, eventually forming large lumps of granulation tissue. It can also invade surrounding lymph nodes.*

### Symptoms

Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, depression, weight loss, and a mass in the abdomen. Pythiosis of the skin in dogs is very rare, and appears as ulcerated lumps. Primary infection can also occur in the bones and lungs.

### Treatment

Traditional treatment options for Pythium infected dogs include surgical resection of infected tissues and antifungal medications. Overall success when using one or more of these treatment options is only +/- 25%. Recently the USDA has approved an Immunotherapy treatment product. This product consists of purified proteins derived from Pythium Insidiosum. These proteins are injected into the infected patient in an effort to elicit an immune response which will kill the invading Pythium. In horses this treatment is successful in >90% of cases, however, in canine cases the success rate is nearer 50%. Work continues on a new version of this product which will demonstrate a higher success rate in dogs.

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