



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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Ticks

Issue Description

Ticks are blood-feeding parasites that are often found in tall grass and shrubs where they will wait to attach to a passing host. Physical contact is the only method of transportation for ticks. Ticks do not jump or fly, although they may drop from their perch and fall onto a host. Some species actively stalk the host by foot.

Changes in temperature and day length are some of the factors signaling a tick to seek a host. Ticks can detect heat emitted or carbon dioxide respired from a nearby host. They will generally drop off the animal when full, but this may take several days. In some cases, ticks will live for some time on the blood of an animal.

Ticks can be found in most wooded or forested areas throughout the world. They are especially common in areas where there are deer trails or horse paths.

Some of the more common diseases that can be contracted from a tick bite include: Babesiosis, Ehrlichiosis, Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Southern tick-associated rash illness, Tick-borne relapsing fever, and Tularemia.

Symptoms

Since tick-transmitted diseases encompass several different illnesses, the symptoms and warning signs of a disease caused by one of these insects will not always be the same. Furthermore, even with respect to one specific disease, exhibited symptoms are not always the same from dog to dog. However, some of the most common warning signs that occur as a result of a variety of different tick-borne diseases include loss of appetite and lethargy. An elevated fever is also a typical symptom of many tick-transmitted illnesses.

In addition to these more general symptoms, certain diseases also tend to give rise to a number of more specific warning signs. For example, Lyme disease often causes lameness and arthritis in a dog. An animal suffering from this illness may have swollen joints, limp, and suffer from a stiff back. Rocky Mountain spotted fever can also cause joint disease in dogs, as well as depression, rashes, and skin hemorrhages. The symptoms of Ehrlichiosis tend to be quite subtle and can include bleeding tendencies, difficulty with breathing, and swollen lymph nodes. Tick paralysis is a condition characterized by a loss of mobility that begins to develop approximately seven to nine days after infection by the insect. This immobility can range from mild unsteadiness to complete paralysis of all four legs. If you observe any of these symptoms in your dog, contact a veterinarian immediately. Even if you only notice subtle signs of illness, it's still important to have your dog examined by a professional who will be able to determine the source of your pet's suffering. Prompt diagnosis and treatment of a tick-transmitted disease will go a long way toward easing your pet's misery and protecting its health, comfort, and happiness.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis of a tick-transmitted disease in a dog is based upon clinical signs and laboratory tests. When dealing with a canine patient that has potentially contracted a disease from one of these insects, a veterinarian will take the animal's complete medical history and conduct a thorough physical examination. This will allow the doctor to evaluate the dog's general health, check for clinical signs, and narrow down possible causes of the patient's suffering.

In addition to a physical examination, the veterinarian may perform a number of tests in order to confirm a diagnosis of a specific tick-borne disease. Such tests may include blood tests that will allow for the evaluation of levels of hemoglobin, certain enzymes, or other substances. In a case of suspected Lyme disease, for example, a blood sample will be taken in order to test for an increase in antibodies to the *Borrelia* organism. In order for the canine patient to test positive for an active infection, the levels of these antibodies must show a four-fold increase. Once the particular disease affecting the dog has been identified, an appropriate treatment plan can be developed and

implemented.

Causes

Tick-borne diseases are transmitted to dogs when one of these insects passes its infected or toxic saliva into the animal's blood stream as it feeds. Ticks attach to canines when the animals pass through bushes or grass where the ticks are living. Most of the common tick-transmitted diseases that affect dogs are caused by bacteria or toxins present in the saliva of one of these external parasites. The type of bacteria present will determine the type of disease that the dog contracts.

Lyme disease is the most common disease transmitted by these external parasites in both North America and Europe. When a tick carrying Lyme disease attaches to a host, it infects the animal with *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the type of bacteria that causes this illness. Rocky Mountain spotted fever is a rickettsial illness, and is also passed to the host through the tick's saliva. Generally, however, the tick must remain attached to a host for several hours in order to transmit this disease. Canine Ehrlichiosis is also a rickettsial disease and develops in a dog when a tick transmits Ehrlichia bacteria to the host. Tick paralysis is caused by a toxin that is released in a female tick's saliva as she feeds. This toxin affects the dog's nervous system, which then leads to paralysis.

Treatment

Most dog tick-transmitted diseases can be effectively treated with antibiotics. Doxycycline is a common antibiotic frequently used to treat both canine Lyme disease and canine ehrlichiosis. Typically, antibiotics work very well in such circumstances and dogs treated in this manner usually show marked improvement within two days. In a case of tick paralysis, symptoms generally begin to subside once the tick has been removed from the dog. Some dogs may also require supportive therapy, such as the administration of intravenous fluids, in order to help them fight the infection and overcome the disease.

Some dogs may also benefit from homeopathic remedies and supplements. Supplements that provided omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants help to boost a dog's immune system and improve its overall health, making it more able to combat any number of diseases. Also, when a dog is sick, homeopathic remedies can help to relieve troubling symptoms. For example, omega-3 fatty acids, chondroprotectives, and a number of homeopathic products can help to reduce inflammation and relieve joint pain caused by Lyme disease. This increases a dog's comfort as it recovers from this tick-transmitted illness.

When dealing with tick-borne diseases and your dog, prevention is the best method of safeguarding your pet. Keeping your dog vaccinated against Lyme disease and regularly inspecting your pet for ticks are both important parts of preventative care. It's always a good idea to consult with your veterinarian about the dangers that ticks pose in your particular area so that you can educate yourself on how best to protect your individual dog.

Prevention

To control ticks outdoors so they don't get transmitted inside, you can use liquid spray using a hand sprayer or a hand spreader. Using the amount instructed on the label for liquid spray and granule. Apply the solution and granule uniformly on the entire lawn, large turfs, and other landscaped areas. Apply on bushes, wooded and shaded areas as well. If there is already a tick infestation inside the home, you can use liquid spray using a hand sprayer with a mist and pinpoint nozzle, dust using a duster and aerosol. Using the amount instructed on the label, apply the liquid solution and aerosol around window/door frames, window sills, cracks and crevices, near pet areas, baseboards, corners, storage areas, closets, around utility pipes, attics and eaves, cabinets, sinks, furnaces, stoves, behind and under refrigerators, and carpets. Pay special attention to pet areas. Ticks may be on the bed and furniture, it is safe to be used on beds and furniture. After the application of liquid solution and aerosol, leave the house for about 3 hours and ventilate the house once you come back only if you sprayed the whole entire carpet, or mattress. After you come back home, steam vacuum the home thoroughly. Reapplications may be needed. If that is the case, reapply to retreat the home.

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