

West Lakeland Veterinary Group

Ticks are a particular problem in west Cumbria due to the abundance of bracken covered fells. If you regularly walk in the fells then your dog is at risk of contracting ticks and possibly Lyme disease (borreliosis).



What is Lymes disease?

Lyme disease is bacterial infection which is spread by tick parasites. The bacteria in question is called *Borrelia burgdorferi*

How will my dog contract Lyme disease?

The disease is spread by infected tick parasites attaching and feeding your animals blood

What symptoms will my dog show ?

The most common signs exhibited by dogs are fever with one or more swollen and painful joints. This may involve multiple joints and may recur frequently over many weeks (so called "shifting leg lameness"). Other symptoms are :

- Stiff walk with arched back
- Sensitivity to touch
- Breathing difficulties
- Depression
- Anorexia
- Enlarged lymph nodes (glands)
- Heart problems (rare)
- Nervous signs (rare)

Diagnostic tests are available but are often poor at picking up the infection when present

Can my dog be treated if they have contracted Lyme disease?

The bacteria does respond well to antibiotics however the disease process can be long and recurrent if not treated early. Joints can be permanently damaged with the development of arthritis and in severe cases organ failure may result .

If my dog gets a tick will it definitely get Lyme disease ?

No . Not all ticks will carry the infection. Infection is far more likely to occur if the tick is attached for more than 18 hours.

What do I do if I think my dog has a tick ?

Ticks can be removed at home using a small tick hook which can be purchased from your vet. **Do not put alcohol or any noxious substance on the tick!** This causes stress and regurgitation making infectious disease transmission more likely .



Courtesy of Merial animal health

How can I protect my dog ?

Preventing/controlling ticks on your dog is essential to reduce the risk of infection. There are various products including collars, spot-on and oral medications which can help you achieve this. Speak to your vet for advice. Few of these products will stop ticks biting your pet, however killing the tick soon after attachment will reduce the chances of disease transmission. Tick populations are at there highest during the spring and autumn

Prevention

There is vaccine available which will protect your dog against contracting Lyme disease. Please contact the surgery for more details.

If you spend a lot of time enjoying the Lake District fells with your dog then take some time to consider tick control and Lyme's disease prevention .