



Chinook Animal Clinic

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Ticks and Lyme Disease

What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is an illness caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* which can be spread through the bite of certain types of ticks. The two types of ticks responsible for transmitting the disease are the western blacklegged tick and the blacklegged tick.

What are ticks?

Ticks are actually a type of mite. Ticks can vary in size and colour. Blacklegged ticks are very small. Before feeding adult females are approx. 3-5 mm in length and red and dark brown in colour. After feeding they can be as large as a grape.

Where are blacklegged ticks found?

Though western blacklegged ticks are widely distributed in British Columbia, populations are largest in the lower mainland, on Vancouver Island and in the Fraser Valley. Blacklegged ticks on the other hand are found in south eastern Quebec, southern and eastern Ontario, south eastern Manitoba, and part of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

What are the Symptoms of Lyme Disease in pets?

Dogs don't develop a rash like humans do. Most acute cases don't develop any symptoms at all. As veterinarians, we see pets with Lyme disease months after exposure when they come in for a sudden onset of polyarthritis resulting in a shifting leg lameness.

Prevention

On the market there are vaccines available for protection for your pet. There are several topical treatments that assist in protecting your pet from Lyme disease. The goal of any preventive treatment is to hopefully kill the ticks before they attach to your pet and cause illness. The longer the tick is attached to the pet, the higher the likelihood of disease transmission. Always inspect your pet daily for ticks when travelling in high risk areas.

