



## Lyme Disease

Lyme disease, also known as borreliosis, is a bacterial infection transmitted by deer ticks (also called blacklegged ticks). It infects humans and animals. The disease is rare in cats but dogs are quite susceptible. When a tick feeds upon an animal or human it can transmit Lyme disease and cause major illness.

Although uncommon in Central Illinois, the disease is spreading as the deer ticks expand their territory.



### Signs

Unlike humans, pets don't show the classic "bulls eye" skin lesion sign that many people do. Instead, the signs are vague including decreased appetite, lack of energy, fever, swelling of one or more joints with intermittent, recurring lameness, and enlarged lymph nodes. These are the most common signs in dogs.



Kidney failure is the second most common presentation. Signs of kidney failure would include vomiting along with drinking and urinating excessively. There can also be problems with the nervous system and heart. Pets may not show signs of disease for 2-5 months after a tick bite or even later.

### Diagnosis

Lyme disease is not easy to diagnose because the signs mimic many other diseases.

Blood tests and a urinalysis will help rule out other causes of the signs seen as well as detect damage from Lyme disease. An antibody test specifically for Lyme disease will help make the diagnosis.

We also check for other tick-borne diseases since ticks can transmit more than one disease.

### Treatment

Once diagnosed, antibiotics are the main treatment for Lyme disease. Your pet will need to be on antibiotics for at least 30 days. Your pet may also need other medicine for fever and lameness. IV fluids, anti-vomiting medicine, and kidney supplements are the treatments for pets with kidney damage.



Most pets recover from Lyme disease with proper treatment. Unfortunately, the survival rate is poor if the kidneys have been infected.

### Prevention

Prevention is critical. To prevent Lyme disease, keep your dog protected against ticks. Ticks are prevalent in thick brushy areas during most of the year. Ticks can carry other diseases besides Lyme disease and different ticks carry different diseases. Ideally, the flea medicine you are using kills several species of ticks. Check the product you are using to make sure it's protecting your dog completely.

A vaccination for Lyme disease is available for dogs that are at a high risk of contracting the disease. It requires two initial doses and then once a year. This will become more important for all dogs as the disease moves more into our area.