Ehrlichiosis

A disease that occurs when a brown dog tick infected with the bacteria, Ehrlichia canis, bites a dog.

Approximately 12 months ago, we first found a bacterial disease in dogs that is carried by the brown dog tick called Ehrlichiosis.

The tick and the bacteria are found throughout Asia and all over the world, however until now it has not been seen here in Australia. Since last year we have now detected it in dogs on Western Australia, Northern Territory and South Australia, however it has not, as yet, been seen in New South Wales.

It is likely to have come to Australian shores through movement of infected animals.

Ehrlichia are spread from host to host by tick bites - the bacteria live inside cells in the blood stream making them difficult to remove as most antibiotics do not penetrate to the inside of cells.

There are three phases of illness with Ehrlichiosis and it is important we see dogs in the first phase.

If we do and commence treatment then we usually can remove the bacteria 100% from the body.

The clinical signs include:

- being listless
- off food
- may have enlarged lymph nodes and/or spleens

There may be fever and even neurologic symptoms as well, but although the dog may seem pretty sick, the later phases of disease are characterized by low platelet counts and high protein levels.

Treatment:

Doxycycline antibiotic is effective against most *Ehrlichia* organisms

Prevention:

The key to not getting Ehrlichia is to prevent ticks from biting your dog.

Unfortunately, it does not take long for an infected tick to transmit the disease and all licensed products have an 8-24 hour labelled kill rate for ticks. That means that even with the best anti tick products your pets could theoretically be infected.

Our recommendations are to use the newer products such as Bravecto or Nexgard continuously and if you are going into the affected states to use tick collars as well.

With the combination of a tick collar an oral Tick prevention we believe you reduce the risk of infection by 70-80%.

If it is at all possible avoid taking your dog into tick infested areas and if you own property in those areas use pest exterminators to reduce the environmental contamination.

Please be very aware that a lot of products used to kill ticks in dogs can themselves kill cats.

If you need more information please make an appointment

Regards

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