Anaplasmosis: The Unsung Tick Disease

A recent PetsMatter article noted that Lyme disease, typically a media superstar during the spring and summer months, is on the rise. But Lyme is not the only threat. In fact, a single tick can transmit multiple diseases with one bite, and one such disease—anaplasmosis—is vying for attention.

Anaplasmosis, or tick fever, is transmitted by brown dog ticks and deer ticks, also referred to as black-legged ticks. It affects humans and animals alike but is not zoonotic. In other words, you won’t get anaplasmosis from your pet, but you could get it from a tick.

Easily confused with Lyme disease, symptoms appear suddenly in pets and include arthritis-like stiffness, high fever, lethargy, vomiting, loss of appetite, and diarrhea. In rare cases, anaplasmosis can also cause seizures and other neurological disorders. Most pets show signs within 14 days of infection.

If you suspect your pet has been infected, see your veterinarian immediately. Diagnostic tests may include a blood count, a chemistry profile to check organ function, a urinalysis, and a screen for other tick-borne diseases.

If your pet is infected, your veterinarian will prescribe an antibiotic. Most pets show signs of improvement within a few days and make a complete recovery. Cases of anaplasmosis have been reported throughout the United States. To prevent exposure, avoid tick-infested areas, thoroughly comb and inspect your dog within hours of possible exposure, and use a tick-control product.

Your veterinarian is the best source for more information on the dangers of ticks in your area and can recommend a safe and effective tick repellent.

Is Your Pet in Pain?

To protect themselves from predators, animals naturally hide their pain. Subtle changes in behavior may be the only clues that your pet is suffering.

Symptoms
Signs of discomfort include:
• Abnormal chewing, bad breath, or face rubbing
• Excessive head shaking
• Sudden weight change
• Lack of grooming
• Loss of appetite
• Changes in posture
• Lagging on walks
• Difficulty getting up
• Lethargy or restlessness
• Enlarged lymph nodes
• Excessive licking, especially at joints
• Reluctance to be touched

If you notice these or other changes in your pet, have your pet assessed by your veterinarian.

Treatment
There are many safe treatment options for managing your pet’s pain. Traditionally, steroids have been used to decrease pain caused by inflammation, but because of possible side effects, they generally aren’t used for prolonged periods. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are often used after surgeries and to treat orthopedic-related pain with fewer side effects.

Nutritional supplements and complementary therapies, such as acupuncture, may also help, depending on the type of pain your pet is experiencing. Never try to treat your pet yourself.

Some painkillers, including acetaminophen (found in Tylenol), or combinations of medications can be toxic to pets in very small doses. Do not give your pet any medication without consulting your veterinarian.

Pets a Go Go: Tips for Traveling with Your Furry Friend

The summer travel season is here, and if you are like many pet owners, you will be packing a bag for your pet too.

Traveling with your pet can be a rewarding experience, but a successful trip depends on more than packing your pet’s favorite tennis ball or catnip toy.

To ensure the safety and happiness of your pet, start planning early, research transportation and lodging options, and make an appointment with your veterinarian.

Jet Setters
Most major airlines transport animals, but before booking a flight, consider all the factors, including your pet’s size and temperament and possible weather conditions.

Pets that are too large to fit in a pet carrier under your seat must fly as checked baggage in the plane’s cargo section.

Many animals become anxious in unfamiliar environments, particularly when separated from their owners, and can suffer both emotionally and physically during a flight. Sedation is not considered a safe option.

“An animal’s natural ability to balance and maintain equilibrium is altered under sedation,” saysyour veterinarian.

Mites and Mange

When an Itch Isn’t Just an Itch

Veterinary medicine has advanced quickly, and the range of treatment options is not only broader but safer than ever before. Even so, finding out your pet needs surgery can be frightening.

Although complications are always possible, the AAHA Standards of Accreditation help ensure your pet benefits from the best surgical techniques and sterile practices.

Accreditation Matters

Surgical Protocols Reassure Pet Owners

Many a frustrated pet owner has uttered the words “mangy dog” through gritted teeth when confronted by their furry friend’s latest mischief with the trash or a dead fish, yet many are unaware of what mange actually is.

A year-round skin disease caused by microscopic mites, sarcoptic mange, also known as scabies, is highly contagious and affects dogs, cats, and even humans.

Pets typically get mites from other animals, but because mites can survive without a host for up to 22 days, some pets contract mange without ever having direct contact with an infected animal.

Sarcoptic mange is most common in warm, moist environments. Courtney Blake, DVM, Medical Director of AAHA-accredited VCA Cedar Animal Hospital of Minneapolis, explains, “We see more in Minnesota than in New Mexico, but areas such as Florida and Louisiana would see the most.”

Symptoms and Diagnosis
Mites burrow into your pet’s skin and cause intense itching and irritation, which results in hair loss and flaky...

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Tips for Traveling with Your Furry Friend

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Dr. Patricia Olson, DVM, PhD. “When the kennel is moved, a sedated animal may not be able to brace and prevent injury.”

Gary L. Rose, DVM, of AAHA-accredited Cabrillo Veterinary Hospital in San Diego, Calif., adds “When heav-ily sedated, some short-nosed breeds can have trouble breathing.”

Temperature extremes can also put your pet at risk. Many airlines do not transport pets during the hottest months of the year, or will not accept pets when the forecasted temperature is above a certain point.

Look for flights in the early morning or late evening, when temperatures are at their lowest.

On the Road

Of course there are also safety concerns when traveling by car. Pet crates are strongly recommended. If an accident occurs, pet crates can protect animals from impact injuries and also prevent them from running out into traffic.

Marci Cook, DVM of AAHA-accredited Shiloh Veterinary Hospital in Billings, Mt., says, “A crate offers a safe environment for your pet and helps them to feel comfortable.”

Rose recommends introducing your pet to the crate over several weeks. “Get them used to it by feeding them in it, and by taking short trips around the neighborhood to see how they do.”

For pets prone to motion sickness, Rose advises, “Make sure there’s adequate ventilation in the car. Keep [it] cool and comfortable. If your pet still shows signs of motion sickness, medication is a must.”

Veterinarian can also tell you if your pet needs additional vaccinations or preventive medications for the area in which you will be traveling.

Health Certificates

Most airlines require pets be examined by a veterinarian no more than 10 days prior to the date of travel. Be prepared to present health and rabies certificates at the time of departure.

If you are traveling by car, pack a copy of your pet’s prescripions and vaccination records. Some states require proof of rabies vaccination.

Your veterinarian can also tell you if any accident occurs, pet crates can protect animals from impact injuries and also prevent them from running out into traffic.

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 Lodging

Always research accommodations before leaving home, and make reserves- nations whenever possible.

Many hotels and inns allow pets but may have size and weight limits, breed restrictions, or a limit on the number of pets allowed per room.

Campgrounds also have pet policies and occasionally prohibit pets altogether. State and national parks that allow pets often restrict them from certain areas, such as hiking trails and beaches.

Resources and Additional Information


Understanding MRSA Symptoms: www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/understanding-mrsa-symptoms

Caring for an Infected Pet: tahilla.typepad.com/petmsra/files/annette_loeffler_advice_pets_at_home.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/attr_mrsa_ca.html

Worms and Germs Blog: www.wormsandgermsblog.com/articles/another-category/test-subcategory

Additional Information

Healthy Pet Hospital Locator: healthypet.adahanet.org/eeweb
Bringing Fido: www.bringingfido.com
Traveling With Your Cat: vet.osu.edu/2372.htm
Pet-Friendly Campgrounds in the U.S.: www.pethfriendlytravel.com/?page=campgrounds
Traveling With Pets to National Parks: usparks.about.com/library/weekly/aa042598.htm
Crate Training (Dogs): www.hus.org/pets/pet_care/our_pets_for_life_program/dog_behavior_tipsheets/crate_training.html
Free-Access Crate Training (FACT) for Cats: www.mmiliani.com/feline-crate-training.html
American Animal Hospital Association: 800/252-2242

If an accident occurs, pet crates can protect animals from impact injuries and also prevent them from running out into traffic.

Additional Information

Healthy Pet Hospital Locator: healthypet.adahanet.org/eeweb
Bringing Fido: www.bringingfido.com
Traveling With Your Cat: vet.osu.edu/2372.htm
Pet-Friendly Campgrounds in the U.S.: www.pethfriendlytravel.com/?page=campgrounds
Traveling With Pets to National Parks: usparks.about.com/library/weekly/aa042598.htm
Crate Training (Dogs): www.hus.org/pets/pet_care/our_pets_for_life_program/dog_behavior_tipsheets/crate_training.html
Free-Access Crate Training (FACT) for Cats: www.mmiliani.com/feline-crate-training.html
American Animal Hospital Association: 800/252-2242

MRSA: Is It Time to Panic?

Ethicillin-resistant Staphylo-
ococcus aureus (MRSA), an antibiotic-resistant “superbug” is receiving consistent media attention, with recent articles discussing whether pets are transmitting the infectious bacteria to people.

Mary Ann Calcaterra, DVM, AAHA board member, and founder of accredited Parkway Veterinary Hospital in Lake Oswego, Ore., says, “Animals are less of a risk for spread of the disease than humans.

“This is an important disease, but to put it in perspective, in the United States, the common flu is responsible for approximately 100,000 hospitalizations per year and 36,000 deaths. MRSA is estimated [by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] to be associated with approximately 94,000 hospitaliza-
tions and 19,000 deaths per year.”

“MRSA is a concern but . . . rates in pets are low,” says Scott Weese, DVM, of the Ontario Veterinary College.

“People should remember that other people are usually a greater risk of MRSA than their pets,” contin-
ues Weese, who is part of a team of researchers studying MRSA in humans and companion animals.

Just the Facts

• MRSA is spread by contact with people, animals, or objects with the bacteria on them.

• Pets can become colonized by staff working in veterinary clinics or human hospitals.

• Colonized pets and people are asymptomatic, but can become infected if the bacteria enter the body through a wound or an open sore.

• Symptoms in humans begin with red bumps resembling pimples or spider bites.

• Symptoms in pets include fever, loss of appetite, and open sores.

Weese explains, “MRSA infections can range from inapparent to rapidly fatal,” but he goes on to say, “The majority of animals with MRSA will recover with proper treatment.”

Advice for pet owners

If your pet shows signs of MRSA or has been exposed to MRSA, call your veterinarian immediately.

“The single most effective preven-
tion protocol is appropriate hygiene — like washing your hands!” says Takashima.

Weese offers similar advice. “Routine, common sense practices such as hand-
washing, judicious antibiotic use, and good veterinary care can reduce the risk of MRSA infection and transmission.”

MRSA commonly lives in the nose in addition to the infection site, so Weese also advises avoiding contact with your pet’s face.

MRSA is highly contagious. Takashima notes if you suspect your pet is infected, alert staff and doctors before bringing your pet into a veteri-
nary clinic.

Additional Information

Healthy Pet Hospital Locator: healthypet.adahanet.org/eeweb
Bringing Fido: www.bringingfido.com
Traveling With Your Cat: vet.osu.edu/2372.htm
Pet-Friendly Campgrounds in the U.S.: www.pethfriendlytravel.com/?page=campgrounds
Traveling With Pets to National Parks: usparks.about.com/library/weekly/aa042598.htm
Crate Training (Dogs): www.hus.org/pets/pet_care/our_pets_for_life_program/dog_behavior_tipsheets/crate_training.html
Free-Access Crate Training (FACT) for Cats: www.mmiliani.com/feline-crate-training.html
American Animal Hospital Association: 800/252-2242
**Surgical Protocols Reassure Pet Owners**

Surgical protocols at AAHA-accredited clinics include:

- **Pre-surgical assessments.** Prior to surgery, the veterinary team verifies the specifics of the procedure; completes a physical exam of the patient; and ensures blood tests have been completed, documented, and reviewed by the veterinarian. These precautions help determine if your pet is at risk for complications while under general anesthesia.

- **Dedicated surgical suites.** To prevent post-surgical infections and cross-contamination, surgeries are performed in a room used only for sterile surgical procedures.

- **Surgical attire.** Staff must wear disposable caps and masks when entering the surgical suite. Anyone involved in the procedure itself must also wear sterile gowns and single-use gloves.

- **Sterile packs and equipment.** Surgical instruments are carefully cleaned, sterilized, and wrapped prior to the procedure to help prevent infections.

AAHA's Standards of Accreditation diminish the risks associated with surgery and help ensure the highest level of care. The safety and comfort of your “best friend” are always of the utmost importance.

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**Travel Tips and Car Safety**

- Be sure your pet is wearing a flat collar with identification tags at all times.

- If your pet doesn't have a microchip, consider having one implanted.

- Know basic pet first aid, and carry a first aid kit.

- Never allow your pet to travel with its head outside the car window.

- Do not allow pets to ride in the front seat. They are at risk of being thrown into the windshield, can interfere with your ability to drive, or could be injured by an airbag.

- Disable electric window controls. Dogs have been known to get their heads stuck in windows after stepping on the buttons.

- Stop for “potty breaks” every two hours.

- Always leash your pet before opening the car door.

**Buckle Up Your Barker: Pet Seat Belts Save Lives**

For most of us, fastening our seatbelts as soon as we get into a car is second nature. Now, a new consumer group called Bark-BuckleUp is educating pet owners about the need for similar safety restraints for pets.

The Travel Industry Association of America reports that 29 million U.S. dog owners travel with their canine companions, yet a 2007–2008 national survey of pet owners conducted by the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association revealed that 80% of pet owners who travel with their pets never use a restraint.

“In an accident, an unbucketed cat or dog can become a projectile, risking serious injury to the pet, the driver, and passengers,” says Bark-BuckleUp’s cofounder Christina Lynn.

Some states have passed laws restricting dogs from open vehicles, such as pick-up trucks, or require them to travel in crates, or with cross-tie restraints. This follows in the wake of numerous accidents, including the widely publicized 1999 incident in which author Stephen King was struck by a car and gravely injured after the car’s driver became distracted while attempting to control an unrestrained dog.

“My opinion is that requiring pets to be appropriately restrained in pick-ups and cars is quite a positive and responsible move,” offers Alicia Faggella, DVM, and Critical Care Director at AAHA-accredited Dove Lewis Emergency Animal Hospital in Portland, Ore. “Too often, we see animals that have been injured or killed secondary to jumping or falling out of pick-up trucks. Animals in closed vehicles have also been injured or killed when involved in car accidents where the animal has not been restrained appropriately.”

Faggella adds that restraints should be applied appropriately, with the kind of restraint dependent upon vehicle type, size of pet being restrained, and the animal’s temperament. She cautions owners to buy restraints made expressly for that purpose, and not try to construct something on their own.

For further information on this topic, visit these links:

- [www.barkbuckleup.com](http://www.barkbuckleup.com)
- [www.consumeraffairs.com/news04/2008/01/pet_seatbelts.html](http://www.consumeraffairs.com/news04/2008/01/pet_seatbelts.html)

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**Do you want your pet to be featured in PetsMatter?**

Email a picture to PetsMatter@pcaahanet.org. Be sure to include your pet’s name, your city, state, a few lines about your pet, and the name of your veterinarian.
Mites and Mange
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skin. Other symptoms are small red pustules and a yellow crust on the skin. If untreated, sores and infections can develop.

According to Blake, “Some [infestations] look like a bad case of dandruff!” She adds, “Even mice, rats, and guinea pigs can get mites. Their flakes sometimes look red instead of white.” Blake advises pet owners to have their animals evaluated as soon as they notice symptoms. “Symptoms of mites often are mistaken for allergies or skin infections,” she says.

To determine whether your pet is infected, your veterinarian will analyze skin scrapings. However, some infected infections, skin scrapings don’t always rule out mange. So negative scrapings don’t always rule out mange.

The good news is that mange is treatable. There are topical products on the market, as well as a regimen of medicated shampoo baths and body dips that may take care of the problem.

Treatment

The good news is that mange is treatable. There are topical products on the market, as well as a regimen of medicated shampoo baths and body dips that may take care of the problem. Getting rid of mites can be difficult, and the medication can have side effects. However, Blake states that no home remedies effectively treat mites. She also reminds owners that treatment varies depending on the type of mite your pet has.

Lowell Ackerman, DVM, of the AAHA-accredited Harvard clinic, Foster Hospital for Small Animals, concurs. “Each condition is treated separately so there are no ‘general’ treatment recommendations.” Ackerman also points out that the treatments available from veterinarians are safer than home remedies. “Some of the products available over the counter are much more toxic than veterinary preparations.”

A Word of Caution

Sarcoptic mange can affect humans. Ackerman emphasizes following your veterinarian’s instructions, saying, “It is important to protect family members from infection, so proper treatment is critical.”

If you have contact with a mange-infected animal, you may develop an itchy rash of small raised bumps on your chest and abdomen. Usually this condition is temporary and will go away once the animal has been treated. Consult a physician if the problem persists.

Additional Resources


The Pet Center: www.thepetcenter.com/ exa/mites.html

The Pet Health Library: www.veterinarypartners.com/KContent/pk=48&category=68&c08a=616

Faces of the Veterinary Profession

Cancer Studies Put Khanna at Research Forefront

Veterinarians don’t think or ask questions the same way as human doctors,” says Chand Khanna, DVM, PhD, a senior scientist at the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the federal government’s principal agency for cancer research.

“When I was pursuing my PhD at the medical school of the University of Minnesota, I learned that veterinarians think differently from others in the biomedical profession,” Khanna explains. “Veterinarians are comfortable moving between different systems and species… I realized this could be a competitive advantage for veterinarians who wanted a career in biomedical research.”

Dr. Khanna applied this unique perspective when he first joined the NCI. “My initial focus was on a disease called osteosarcoma, a bone cancer common in children. It’s very similar to a cancer that I see and treat in pet animals, mostly dogs.”

Khanna is head of the NCI’s Comparative Oncology Program in Bethesda, Md. Working with 17 veterinary schools across the country, his team of physicians, veterinarians, and biomedical researchers offer cutting-edge therapeutics to treat pet cats and dogs suffering from cancer.

Historically, treating cancer in pets evolved from knowledge learned from treating humans. Dr. Khanna’s comparative oncology program essentially reverses this process. “We help the pet animal who is being treated today and, hopefully, a child with the same disease some time in the future.”

Khanna emphasizes that his research does not harm or infect any animals. “We’re managing cancers in pets that have already developed the disease and aren’t responding to conventional treatments. These pets don’t have other options,” he says.

Khanna also manages a laboratory at the NCI focusing on metastasis, or how cancer spreads throughout the body. But he isn’t a stereotypic “ivory tower” researcher with his eye glued to a microscope. Khanna continues to be a practicing veterinarian, spending two days each week at a clinic in Washington, D.C.

“There are no approved drugs to treat dogs with cancer,” he says. “The drugs we use in our clinic are all approved for human use.”

But with 12 million pet dogs and cats being diagnosed with cancer every year, Khanna is seeing significant improvement in the standards of care and says that more change is on the way. “This is an exciting time for us,” he adds. “I truly think we’re on the cusp of where we imagine cancer in a different way. Until today, veterinarians have only been able to control or manage cancer in pets. But I believe we’ll soon be able to start using the term ‘cure.’”

Is Your Pet in Pain?

Does your dog lag behind on walks? Seem reluctant to go up and down the stairs? Subtle changes in your pet’s behavior may indicate pain.

Ask your doctor about pain management.

www.stepstoplaymore.com

Additional Resources

National Cancer Institute: http://www.cancer.gov/

Comparative Oncology Program: ccr.cancer.gov/resources/cop/public.asp


“I truly think we’re on the cusp of where we imagine cancer in a different way.” — Dr. Chand Khanna, pictured below with Bogie, one of his patients