

## **INQUIRY – Vaccinating for Lyme Disease**

Dear US&R Veterinary Group,

We recently took one of our Task Force canines to our local veterinarian for her annual check-up. We asked for the Lyme vaccine, which is on your recommended list, plus we know we have canine Lyme disease in our area. The veterinarian would not give the vaccine based on a recent study she is aware of which has shown that this vaccine has caused a higher rate of renal failure in black labs (our dog is a black lab). I'm trying to get a copy of this study but want to know if any of you have heard of this.

## **RESPONSE**

The article you may be referring to is titled *ACVIM Small Animal Consensus Statement on Lyme Disease in Dogs: Diagnosis, Treatment, and Prevention*. It is printed in the journal of the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (ACVIM) *J Vet Intern Med* 2006;20:422-434. This article attempts to answer questions about the signs, diagnosis, and treatment of Lyme disease as well as the types, benefits, and risks associated with Lyme vaccination.

There is an association between renal failure and Lyme disease. There is a suggestion that has yet to be proven that the vaccine may make this worse. The cause of the kidney disease is an autoimmune process in which the Lyme organism and antibodies to it cause damage. The role that the vaccine plays in preventing or possibly exacerbating this condition has not been fully determined.

Due to the somewhat controversial nature of this vaccine, the question of vaccination should be discussed at length with your local veterinarian. Vaccine safety, prevalence of Lyme in your area, risk of contracting Lyme disease based on a dog's individual activities, and risk of Lyme-related kidney disease are all various factors your veterinarian considers in their recommendations.

The issue for search canines involves possible travel for a deployment, from perhaps a non-endemic Lyme area to an area where Lyme disease is highly prevalent. This factor should also be considered regarding the decision to vaccinate.

One thing that all veterinarians do agree on is that tick prevention should be an important part of Lyme disease prevention. There are several spot-on products, and many veterinarians add a flea and tick prevention collar as well. Don't forget that checking your dog for ticks is another safeguard, just as you should check yourself!

In light of such controversy, the vaccination protocol recommended on our website is being changed from 'highly recommended based on outdoor lifestyle' to 'Non-Core vaccines – based on individual considerations and recommendations from your local veterinarian'.

Thank you so much for your inquiry about Lyme vaccination. It has helped us to modify our vaccination protocol to better address the uncertainty regarding the benefits and risks associated with this vaccine.