

# The Range Animal Hospital

E6116 U. S. Highway 2  
Ironwood, MI 49938  
906-932-3531  
1-888-380-6319

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Donald C. Martinson DVM

Todd A. Grebner DVM

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Advanced  
Diagnostics, Medicine  
Surgery, Dentistry, &  
Trauma Care  
for  
Large & Small Animals

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## LYME DISEASE IN DOGS

Lyme disease is a disease of people dogs and other animals. Lyme disease is caused by a bacteria called Borrelia burgdorferi. It is commonly transmitted through the bite of an Ixodes tick.

We have seen many clinical cases of Lyme disease. Although most dogs recovered with treatment, we think prevention is best.

The Ixodes tick is much smaller than the common dog tick. This tick is about the size of a lower case "o" including the legs. These ticks are most common in the spring and fall. Up to two thirds of the ticks actually carry the disease.

After a bite from an infected tick, the disease usually takes 30 days to develop, although all dogs may not develop the disease.

Once the disease develops the following signs **may** appear:

- Fever and loss of appetite (these are frequently undetected)
- Lameness and joint pain – often severe. This may occur in several joints, and it is often difficult to pinpoint a location for the pain. Some dogs may develop swellings in the joints. The lameness and pain may migrate from leg to leg and may go away and recur weeks or months later.
- Lymph node swelling - usually in the lymph nodes of the legs.
- Generalized pain.
- Chronic incurable arthritis if the disease is left untreated.
- Kidney and heart disease develop in a some cases.

To diagnose Lyme disease in dogs we rely on

the history (usually a lame, painful, outdoor-type dog), clinical signs (possible joint swellings and fever), a blood test for Lyme and response to treatment. Some dogs test positive but do not actually have the disease. This test does not differentiate between active infection or exposure without infection.

Some infected dogs take much longer than 30 days to develop infection.

Treatment for Lyme disease is usually easy with one of several effective antibiotics. They must be given for 2-3 weeks and in higher doses than are usually administered.

Prevention of Lyme disease is very effective with the vaccine. We recommend vaccinating in the spring before the tick season. Unvaccinated dogs must receive two injections the first year. Another aid in Lyme disease prevention is tick control. Read the segment below to learn more about that!

We are very pleased with the results the Lyme vaccine has given us. The number of Lyme cases seems to be decreasing. Vaccinating in the spring is most effective as it will give the best immunity during the tick season.

Finally, can you catch Lyme disease from your dog? Your dog can bring ticks home to you and contribute to a case of human Lyme disease. Please use good hygienic precautions and look for ticks on yourself. No one knows if a human can get Lyme disease directly from a dog. The Lyme disease bacteria is found in the urine and blood of an infected dog, but it is not known if the organism can invade a human from contact with infected blood or urine. Again, good hygiene is your best bet.