Diseases Tick Me Off!

It’s Shelby again with Antrim Veterinary Hospital. In this article I will discuss Anaplasmosis and Ehrlichia. Anaplasmosis can be transmitted to your pet by either the deer tick or the brown dog tick. Your pet may be infected but not show any signs of the disease for 21 days or more! You may notice vomiting, diarrhea, arthritis-like stiffness or pain or more commonly no signs at all! This is why testing at least yearly is recommended. There is no vaccine available, so prevention is key. Year round monthly tick prevention using products like Frontline Gold or Nexgard is recommended. You can also feel for ticks or hard bumps after your pet has been outside and if you find a tick remove it promptly. If your pet is infected with Anaplasmosis it can be treated with antibiotics. It cannot be transmitted to you from your dog but you can get it directly from an infected tick.

Ehrlichiosis is also transmitted by the brown dog tick. The signs of Ehrlichiosis are a little more complicated than that of Anaplasmosis. The signs are divided into 3 stages: acute, subclinical, and chronic. In the acute stage signs of the disease may include fever, swollen lymph nodes, respiratory distress, weight loss, bleeding disorders, and possibly neurological signs. With the subclinical stage your pet may have no signs of the illness but may develop laboratory changes. With the final stage, chronic, your dog is more likely to have anemia, thrombocytopenia (decreased platelets), bleeding episodes, lameness, swollen limbs, eye problems, and neurological problems. Just like Anaplasmosis treatment is antibiotics but a long course of treatment may be needed.

Lyme disease is the most common tick borne disease seen in our area. Several species of ticks can carry this disease but the most common type is the deer tick. Humans can get Lyme disease but they cannot contract it directly from our pets. Lyme disease is harder to detect in animals then in people. Pets do not develop the “bullseye rash” that we hear about with people. Once a pet is infected with Lyme disease the organism is carried to many parts of the body and most likely will settle in joints. Symptoms include generalized pain, decreased appetite, high fever, and limping that appears suddenly and may shift between limbs. This lameness may disappear if left untreated but will recur weeks to months later. Pets may be infected for over a year before showing any signs of the disease and the symptoms are similar to many other diseases. Treatment of Lyme disease includes antibiotics, similar to that of Anaplasmosis and Ehrlichiosis. There is a vaccine available for Lyme disease that is initially given twice 3-4 weeks apart, then boostered annually. It has been shown to be safe and highly effective.

In my next article I will discuss how to prevent and test for these diseases and the products we carry here at Antrim Veterinary Hospital.