

## Test for Lyme Disease in Dogs

**Many dogs with Lyme Disease display no visible signs for months.**

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Dog owners can now leave the veterinary clinic knowing whether or not their dogs are suffering from three different tick-borne diseases.

The canine SNAP 4Dx in-clinic blood test screens dogs for exposure to Lyme disease and two other tick-borne diseases while also testing for heartworm.

After receiving USDA approval in 2006, the test is now available to veterinary clinics throughout the country.

Lyme disease causes similar signs in dogs and humans, including fatigue, fever, muscle/joint pain and enlarged lymph nodes. The disease is sometimes referred to as “the great imitator” by doctors and veterinarians because its symptoms mimic other diseases.

The range of signs can also make Lyme disease difficult to diagnose from clinical signs alone, with some dogs displaying no visible signs for months.

Matt Eberts, a Minnesota-based veterinarian involved in SNAP 4Dx clinical trials, said he was shocked at early results which showed 40 percent of the dogs he examines testing positive for Lyme disease.

“There’s really no way for pet owners to know what’s wrong with their dogs without getting them tested. With this advanced testing, we’re now able to quickly identify dogs that have become infected and work with pet owners to look at treatment options or further diagnoses,” Eberts said.

Pat Smith, president of the Lyme Disease Association, said she believes dogs can serve as a sort of warning system for people.

“What we learn from our canine friends can tell us a great deal about where human outbreaks will occur in the future. Dogs play in some of the same areas as our children. By monitoring our pets, we can better protect our children in the process,” she said.

Levy recommends checking active dogs for ticks daily. Dog owners can simply brush their fingers through their dogs’ fur, applying enough pressure to feel small bumps.

If a small lump is felt, pet owners should pull the fur apart to identify the object. An embedded tick will vary in size, ranging from a pinhead to a grape. They are usually black or dark brown. Depending on the size and location of the tick, its legs are sometimes visible, too.

For more information about dogs and tick-borne diseases, visit <http://dogsandticks.com>