

NYS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & MARKETS
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FAST FACTS ABOUT LYME DISEASE

DEFINITION

LYME DISEASE IS MULTISYSTEMIC DISEASE AFFECTING PRIMARILY THE JOINTS, THE MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM AND THE NEUROLOGICAL SYSTEM.

CAUSE

THIS ILLNESS (AFFECTING HUMANS AND MANY DOMESTIC ANIMAL SPECIES) IS CAUSED BY THE SPIROCHETAL (CORKSCREW SHAPED) BACTERIA *BORRELIA BURGDORFERI* WHICH IS TRANSMITTED BY THE BITE OF INFECTED "DEER" OR "BLACK-LEGGED TICKS". TICKS CONTRACT THE BACTERIA BY FEEDING ON A RODENT, WHICH IS ALREADY INFECTED WITH *BORRELIA BURGDORFERI*. ADULT TICKS, WHICH ARE PRESENT IN THE FALL AND EARLY SPRING, ARE THE STAGE MOST LIKELY TO FEED ON HORSES.

CLINICAL SIGNS

CLINICAL SIGNS APPEAR IN LESS THAN 10% OF HORSES THAT ARE INFECTED WITH THE BACTERIA. MOST COMMON SIGNS = LAMENESS (SHIFTING FROM LIMB TO LIMB AND GENERALIZED STIFFNESS) AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGES (IRRITABILITY, UNWILLINGNESS TO WORK).

DIAGNOSIS

PRESUMPTIVE 'EVIDENCE' IS USED IN DIAGNOSING LYME DISEASE: HISTORY OF TICK EXPOSURE IN AN AREA WHERE THERE IS KNOWN LYME DISEASE (ENDEMIC DISEASE), A THOROUGH VETERINARY EXAM TO RULE OUT OTHER POSSIBLE CAUSES, POSITIVE BLOOD TESTS (INDICATE ONLY EXPOSURE TO THE BACTERIA, NOT THAT ILLNESS IS LYME DISEASE), AND RELIEF OF SIGNS AFTER ANTIBIOTIC THERAPY.

TREATMENT

LYME DISEASE IS TREATED WITH ANTIBIOTICS, ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DRUGS AND/OR MEDICINES TO HELP REPLACE THE NORMAL INTESTINAL BACTERIA KILLED BY THE ANITIBIOTICS.

PROGNOSIS

LYME DISEASE CAN BE CURED WITH ANTIBIOTICS. SOME HORSES DEVELOP LAMINITIS AS A RESULT OF A REACTION TO TOXINS RELEASED BY BACTERIA KILLED THE FIRST FEW DAYS OF TREATMENT.

PREVENTION

TICK CONTROL IS OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE- REDUCE TICK HABITAT (MOW PASTURES, REMOVE BRUSH, WOOD PILES, AND OTHER DEBRIS FROM PASTURE AREAS TO DISCOURAGE RODENT NESTING WHICH DECREASES TICK POPULATION). TREAT TURNED-OUT HORSES WITH INSECT REPELLENT. INSPECT HORSES DAILY FOR TICKS; REMOVE ATTACHED TICKS IMMEDIATELY. REDUCE DEER POPULATION ON YOUR PROPERTY.

VACCINATION

THERE IS NO VACCINE FOR LYME DISEASE CURRENTLY LICENSED FOR HORSES. THERE ARE SEVERAL AVAILABLE FOR DOGS AND A HUMAN FORMULATION AS WELL.

-Dr. Lyda W. Denney-