

Mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas, oh my!

Spring is almost here, but with the warmer weather also comes the creepy, crawling critters that can spread diseases and parasites to our pets. Mosquitoes can transmit heartworm disease to dogs (and to cats) and ticks can transmit Lyme disease, anaplasmosis and ehrlichiosis to dogs and to humans. This time of the year, heartworm prevention and good tick control are the best ways to help keep our pets safe and parasite-free.

Lyme Disease, Anaplasmosis and Ehrlichiosis

These days, people seldom mention ticks without also mentioning Lyme disease. However, new research shows that many of these eight-legged parasites carry multiple diseases that are transmissible to pets. Like Lyme disease, canine anaplasmosis is spread by infected **deer ticks**, while canine ehrlichiosis is spread by infected **brown dog ticks**. Humans can also be infected by tick borne diseases, but cannot catch the diseases directly from a dog. A human would be infected by a tick bite of their own.

What are the signs?

Once your dog is infected, they **may or may not** show symptoms. Below is a list of some of the most common signs.

Lameness

Lethargy

Loss of appetite

Swollen, painful joints

Fever

Depression

How do I know if my dog has been infected?

We now have a test that can screen for Lyme disease, Anaplasmosis, Ehrlichiosis and Heartworms. We draw a small amount of blood from your dog, run the test right in our clinic and have results in 10 minutes. This test, called 4Dx and developed by Idexx Labs, is very sensitive and specific, which means if your dog's test result is positive, they have been exposed to the organism. If the test result is negative, it is very likely that it has not been exposed. False positives and false negatives are very few, but they can happen if your dog was exposed to these organisms, but has not mounted a detectable response yet.

For photos of different ticks click on the link below:

<http://www.health.state.ri.us/disease/communicable/lyme/ticks.php>