

Fighting Lyme Disease in Pets and People

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[Lyme disease is not the only concern when it comes to ticks, and ticks are a year round problem even in cold climates! [Click here to learn more about cold weather ticks.](#)]

What started out as a peaceful protest outside of a radio station in Chicago, turned out to be a groundbreaking cooperative effort between the [American Veterinary Medical Association](#) and the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) to help bring more attention to [Lyme disease](#). How did that happen?

Back in the fall of 2013, Steve Dale, a great friend of our profession, was hosting his WGN radio show, [Steve Dale's Pet World](#), and noticed, along with Bill Moller, another [WGN](#) broadcast host, a group of people gathering outside of the studio with signs protesting "something." Steve walked outside and began a dialogue with the protestors, discovering that they were outside with posters to try to create more awareness about Lyme disease in people. Well aware of the problems that we face with regards to Lyme disease and our pets, Steve invited a few of them inside the studio to discuss Lyme disease.

It was clear to Steve that the veterinary community seems to be more proactive about educating pet parents about Lyme and [tick](#) prevention than the medical community. He did learn that Lyme disease is responsible, either directly or indirectly, for many deaths in people annually. Often, because of the indirect relationship, and damage to some key organs like the heart, liver, or kidneys, many of these deaths are attributed to other causes. In fact, according to these protestors, the CDC says that they probably have 10 times more Lyme disease cases on an annual basis than they originally thought!

Tick diseases are prevalent in people as well Including:

- [Anaplasmosis](#)

- [Ehrlichiosis](#)
- [Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever](#)
- [Lyme](#)

Lyme is on the rise—even in our cities—as tick populations are spreading. As many "city dwellers" like to take their dogs to parks, on vacation to mountain areas and into wooded areas, they have been (over the years) bringing ticks back with them to their "city" homes. Those ticks have been thriving. Clearly, a frightening thought!

It is interesting to note that we do more to protect our pets—from a testing, education/prevention, and treatment standpoint, than medical doctors do to protect and educate their patients.

Veterinarians are continually promoting tick prevention and discussing tick borne diseases with clients. We also have many options for tick preventive products and simple, inexpensive in-office tests to detect tick-transmitted diseases. We even have vaccines to protect our pets against Lyme disease. We are far ahead of the human medical profession!

The Collaborative effort formed out of this information exchange led to some discussion with [Dr. Ron Dehaven from the AVMA](#), and ultimately to the joint AVMA-AAP effort to spread the facts about Lyme disease in pets and people.

This AVMA/AAP collaboration is a great example of how to promote the "One Health" initiative, trying to educate the masses about the importance of understanding what we do, how advances in veterinary medicine play an important role in our health and why it is so critical to support collaborative efforts between the medical and veterinary medical communities.

With this in mind, we need to be more aware of the fact that if ticks are found on our pets, or if our pet is diagnosed with Lyme disease, or any tick-borne illness, there exists that strong possibility that we are also at risk to picking up ticks from the shared environment which might infect us as well. In fact, especially with Lyme disease, dogs do not usually become as symptomatic as we do, so early disease may be more difficult to recognize. Be sure to test pets annually for tick-borne diseases and, if disease is suspected or

diagnosed in a household pet, it is important to notify your physician or pediatrician. If you or someone else in your home is diagnosed, make sure to alert your veterinarian and [have your pet checked as well](#).

With the success of this AVMA/AAP collaboration and continued communication between the veterinary medical and the Medical communities, we can continue to work together to save the lives of both pets and their people! [Click here for more details on the AVMA/AAP Lyme partnership](#).

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian -- they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.