

# MECA NEWS



## Take Greater Precautions with Dogs, More Lyme Disease this Year

by Marla Lichtenberger, DVM, DACVECC  
Owner, Board-Certified in Emergency & Critical Care

High tick numbers this year already are leading to more cases of Lyme disease, a serious illness afflicting dogs and people. Generally, this disease is characterized by joint pain, lameness, tremors, fever, fatigue, and lethargy. These symptoms may occur suddenly and then disappear only to reappear weeks to months later. Treatment begins with an extended course of antibiotics.

Autumn, a 5-year-old, chocolate Labrador retriever, came into MECA because of severe pain in her joints and muscles. She had shifting leg lameness and was lethargic. A simple blood test revealed that she was positive for Lyme disease. It is most often transmitted by the deer tick, a parasite common to Wisconsin, and is caused by a bacterium known as *Borrelia burgdorferi*. Deer ticks live in tall grass around the edge of yards, wooded areas, woodpiles or roadsides, and are most active in the spring and summer.

Lyme disease cannot be transmitted to people directly from dogs but preventing exposure to ticks is the best way to prevent the disease for everybody. Keeping animals from thick underbrush reduces their exposure to ticks and dogs should be kept on trails when walked near wooded or tall grass areas. Using topical tick preventative is also recommended.

Anytime dogs are exposed to an area likely infested with ticks they should be checked closely for ticks. Removing the tick quickly is important since the disease is not transmitted until the tick has fed for approximately twelve hours.

Although Autumn suffered from a more serious form of Lyme disease that is almost always fatal, she was immediately started

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## Heat Stroke--Summer Threat for Pets

By Brittany Hall, DVM

Larissa Jankowski took her dog, Molly, for a walk on a hot afternoon this spring, when the eight-year-old cocker spaniel suddenly collapsed. She took Molly home and tried to cool her off, but the dog started to vomit. That's when Jankowski brought her to MECA. Once the animal's temperature starts to increase, a serious condition known as heat stroke can arise, which is exactly what befell this dog. Other common signs of heatstroke include rapid, frantic, noisy breathing, bright red mucous membranes, thick saliva, and loss of consciousness.

Heat stroke is a term commonly used for hyperthermia or elevated body temperature. Dogs are unable to sweat through their skin as humans are. Instead, they release heat primarily through panting. They depend upon this rapid breathing to exchange warm air for cool air. When air temperature is close to body temperature, cooling by rapid breathing is not an efficient process and internal body temperature begins to rise.

Dogs with a restricted airway such as the brachycephalic breeds (flat faced dogs such as pugs, boxers and bulldogs) are at greater risk. In these breeds, clinical signs of heat stroke can occur when the outside temperature and humidity are only moderately elevated.

Some dogs can recover fully from heat stroke if it is caught early enough, others suffer permanent organ damage and require lifelong treatment. Sadly, many dogs do not survive heat stroke.

Treatment of heat stroke depends on immediate care and a safe, controlled, reduction in body temperature. If the temperature drops too quickly the blood vessels can constrict, preventing the body's core from cooling and actually causing the internal temperature to further rise. Intravenous fluids are used as well as cool water may be poured over the head, stomach, underarms and feet, rubbing alcohol may be applied to the footpads to dilate pores.

The most common cause of heat stroke is leaving a dog in  
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3670 S. 108th Street  
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And Specialty Services

# Racine Vet Runs Walk-in Practice

By Steve Busalacchi



No appointments are necessary at Belle City Veterinary Hospital in Racine, which is strictly a dog and cat practice. Co-owner, Genesia Livingston, DVM, says she never practiced in this way before, but decided to continue the previous owner's philosophy: "When animals are sick, they need to be looked at that day." Somehow it works,

though Dr. Livingston says surgeries still must be scheduled.

A Missouri native who grew up on a farm, young Genesia loved all of the animals, and she says the veterinarians who came on emergency calls inspired her to pursue the profession. She became a general veterinarian with a special interest in animal eye care. "I like the minute detail and the very fine dexterity necessary to suture little things," she explains.

Dr. Livingston is a long way from her first practice in Las Vegas, but loves working just a few miles away from Lake Michigan. "It's like living near an ocean. It's beautiful." She spends her free time with her husband and two girls, as well as a Standard Poodle and a Shih Tzu.

## Milwaukee Emergency Center for Animals (MECA)

24/7 ER Veterinary Service  
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# First Aid Course for Pet Owners September 6

You love animals, now get the training necessary to help pets in distress. Dr. Marla Lichtenberger, owner of Milwaukee Emergency Center for Animals and Specialty Services, teaches the first aid courses and CPR certification.

The training has paid off handsomely for the owner of a German Shepherd mix that ended up at MECA. "Their dog was bloated and was trying to vomit, and the owner remembered from my course how serious those symptoms are and brought him in right away," recalls Dr. Lichtenberger. "That quick action saved the dog's life," she said.

The Wisconsin Humane Society first presented this popular course, primarily designed for new pet owners.

"We have a first aid course every 3-4 months and donate all the money to a humane society or rescue organizations," says Dr. Lichtenberger. The course is \$60 and includes a first aid book, CPR certification certificate and a 2-hour course.

The next course is at the Greenfield Public library on September 6, with donations to JR Pups and Stuff rescue and November 22, for Happy Endings rescue.

**For more information, please call (414) 543-PETS or visit [erforanimals.com](http://erforanimals.com).**



## More Lyme Disease ...continued from other side:

on intravenous fluids, antibiotics, pain medication, and blood pressure medications. The longer the illness goes on without treatment, the less likely survival is. Luckily, after several days at MECA and antibiotic treatment for 3 months, Autumn is now off of all medications and continues to do well.

## Heat Stroke...continued from other side:

a car with inadequate ventilation. Other causes include being left in a yard without access to shade or water on a hot day and excessive or vigorous exercise during hot temperatures. All preventable! Always remember:

- Never leave your dog alone in the car on a warm day, regardless of whether the windows are open.
- Do not expose dogs with airway disease or impaired breathing to prolonged heat.
- Restrict exercise during the heat of the day in summer.
- Provide shade and cool water to dogs living outdoors.

Thankfully, Molly responded well to treatment and was able to return home feeling much better the next day. She was treated immediately with IV fluids and her temperature was slowly brought down to a normal level.

Enjoy the warm weather with your pets, knowing you've taken the proper precautions to keep them safe and healthy, especially on the dog days of summer.