

Tick-Transmitted Diseases: Ehrlichiosis

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Most dog owners have heard of Lyme disease. More and more dog owners are becoming aware of ehrlichiosis, another tick-transmitted disease in dogs, and another reason tick control products are so important.

Ehrlichiosis, found throughout the US, is caused by a number of different species of the organism *Ehrlichia*. Some species infect white blood cells, while others affect platelets – cells that help blood to clot.

Ehrlichiosis has 3 phases:

The **acute phase** starts 1-3 weeks after a tick bite and lasts 2-4 weeks. Common symptoms include fever, decreased appetite, weight loss, swollen lymph nodes, and lethargy. Less-common symptoms include nose bleeds, bruising, and joint problems.

The subsequent **subclinical phase** often has few clinical signs, aside from low levels of platelets and white blood cells.

The **chronic phase**, which occurs if the dog cannot fight the infection, may include bleeding problems, nervous system signs, difficulty breathing, weakness, weight loss, and even death.

To help diagnose Ehrlichiosis, a veterinarian will perform a blood test, specifically testing for antibodies – special proteins produced by the dog's body to try to kill the *Ehrlichia*.

Ehrlichiosis is treated with doxycycline, the same antibiotic used to treat Lyme disease. It must be given for many weeks – even months. Severe cases may require steroids and blood transfusions.

No vaccine protects against *Ehrlichiosis*; therefore, tick control is vital. Protect your dog from Ehrlichia by limiting his exposure to ticks, while simultaneously (and consistently) using tick control products such as [K9 Advantix® II](#), or [Preventic Collars](#).