

Texas Greyhound Association
Representing the Greyhound Breeding and Racing Industry in Texas

May 24, 2010

Honorable Yvonne Gonzalez Toureilles
Chairwoman, Agriculture and Livestock Committee
PO Box 2910
Austin, Tx 78768

Dear Chairwoman Gonzalez Toureilles:

We first became aware of the prevalence of tick-borne diseases in dogs at the closing of the Corpus Christi Greyhound Track in December, 2007. The Texas Greyhound Association handled the placement of 203 greyhounds into adoption groups. Several of the adoption groups ran a complete blood panel on the greyhounds as part of their adoption process.

In particular, Greyhound Adoption League of Texas (GALT) has made it standard practice to evaluate the titer levels for ehrlichia canis and babesia canis, both tick-borne blood diseases. Babesia canis is the tick-transmitted piroplasmiasis in dogs, similar to that transmitted to horses.

For the Corpus Christi greyhounds, roughly half of the greyhounds that were tested showed positive for either ehrlichia, babesia or both. Not only do these diseases hinder the greyhounds' athletic ability, they place the greyhounds' overall health at risk in a home or kennel setting.

While we have made progress on educating TGA members on tick prevention and disease treatment, there are thousands of other sporting dogs, pets and companion dogs in Texas that are exposed to ticks daily. We urge the Committee to establish an education program on the prevention, veterinary diagnosis and treatment of tick-borne diseases in dogs.

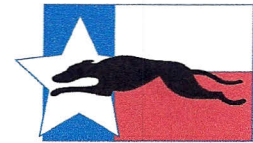
Thank you for your attention. Please contact me if I can provide you with more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane Whiteley".

Diane Whiteley
Executive Director

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May 25, 2010

Honorable Yvonne Gonzalez Toureilles
Chairwoman, Agriculture and Livestock Committee
P. O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768

Dear Chairwoman Gonzalez Toureilles:

Greyhound Adoption League of Texas, Inc. (GALT) receives greyhounds from breeders, trainers, animal shelters, owner releases and strays within the state of Texas. In the course of initial medical evaluation, a tick borne disease panel test is conducted which detects Ehrlichia Canis, Babesia Canis, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever & Lyme, all diseases transmitted from a tick bite. GALT's veterinarians advise this testing as these diseases are exceedingly prevalent in all breeds, including greyhounds, across the state of Texas due to the widespread infestation of ticks. GALT feels a responsibility to its greyhounds and potential adopters to screen for the detection of these diseases. Proper treatment can eliminate these diseases; however, if the greyhound is not tested and treated as necessary, the diseases can go undetected for years manifesting themselves into different illnesses causing difficult, extensive costly treatment, and even death. The tick panel test used by GALT is performed by [ProtaTek Reference Laboratory](#) in Chandler, Arizona, considered one of the best facilities specializing in the diagnosis of tick borne diseases in greyhounds.

To give you current stats, since January 2009 to May 24, 2010, 231 greyhounds have been tested by ProtaTek Reference Laboratory. Of these 231, 146 greyhounds were diagnosed with Ehrlichia Canis (36), Babesia Canis (99), Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (10) and Lyme (1). From January 2008 to December 31, 2008, 235 greyhounds were tested by ProtaTek Reference Laboratory. Of these 235, 113 greyhounds were diagnosed with Ehrlichia Canis (32), Babesia Canis (80), and Lyme (1).

Greyhound Adoption League of Texas, Inc.

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Addison, Texas 75001-0680
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www.GALTx.org



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GALT's protocol treatment for Ehrlichia Canis consists of 6 weeks of Doxycycline at 100 mg per 10 kilograms of weight (i.e. a 60 pound greyhound would receive six 100 mg tablets given 3 in the am and 3 in the pm). In addition two injections of Imidocarb are given 2 weeks apart. The approximate cost for all of these treatments is \$210.00. Treatment for Babesia Canis consists of two injections of Imidocarb given 2 weeks apart, for an approximate treatment cost of \$130. Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Lyme are both treated with 6 weeks of Doxycycline at 100 mg per 10 kilograms of weight (i.e. a 60 pound greyhound would receive six 100 mg tablets given 3 in the am and 3 in the pm). The cost for this treatment is approximately \$80.

Attached to this letter, please find detailed information from ProtaTek's website concerning each of these diseases, as well as pictures of some of GALT's greyhounds that have succumbed to these diseases and some that have survived.

GALT respectfully encourages the commission to act on this issue concerning widespread tick infestation of dogs in the state of Texas. Please feel free to contact us should further information be needed.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susie H. McQuade".

Susie H. McQuade
Founding Member, Board of Directors

Attachments (2).



Apple Martini – succumbed to Ehrlichia



Whiskey - succumbed to Ehrlichia

These survived Ehrlichia:



Skittles



Lee

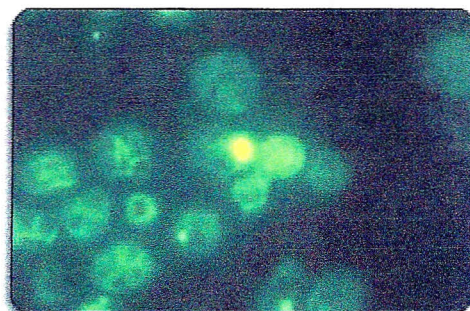


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Greyhound Information

Has your Greyhound ever experienced any of the following symptoms:

- High Fever
- Depression or lethargy
- Anorexia
- Anemia
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Loss of appetite or loss of body weight
- Vomiting
- Nose bleeds, skin hemorrhage, or any other unusual bleeding
- Swollen legs or lymph nodes
- Nervous system disorders, such as stiff gait, head tilt, seizures, or twitching
- Pale gums and/or inner eye membranes
- If racing, declining performance



Has your Greyhound:

- Traveled extensively, especially in western, southwestern, or eastern regions of the US
- Traveled in regions where ticks are prevalent
- Frequented kennels with high turnover/large number of dogs
- Received a blood transfusion
- Been involved in a blood donor program
- Experienced stressors, such as poor diet, illness, relocation, or racing
- Been born to a known *Babesia canis*-infected dam

If any of these symptoms or conditions apply to your dog, it is important that you know about recent findings of tick-borne diseases affecting Greyhounds all over the U.S. Protatek Reference Lab has performed serologic testing for tick-borne diseases on over 5000 Greyhounds since March 1995. Findings revealed that some 40% of these animals are silent, asymptomatic carriers of at least one or more tick-borne disease agents.

Your dog may have been infected with, or exposed to, a number of tick-borne disease agents which may be uncommon in your area. In many cases, Greyhounds may actually appear perfectly healthy, with virtually no symptoms of disease, but be in a carrier state and potentially exposing other dogs, including their house mates, if ticks are prevalent.

Two similar and potentially serious tick-borne diseases are Canine Ehrlichiosis, also known as Tick Fever, and Canine Babesiosis. Both agents travel through the dog's blood stream and are typically transmitted by ticks; sometimes by the same tick bite. Greyhounds, as a breed, seem to be unique in their susceptibility to these diseases primarily because of travel to and residency in a variety of states and the potential widespread infestation of ticks at Greyhound breeding, training, and racing kennels. Because Greyhounds are transported across state lines for racing purposes and to adoptive homes, and the fact that they are used for blood donors, there is much greater possibility for widespread transmission of these diseases, once thought to be more geographically isolated in occurrence. Moreover, the Greyhound breed is known to be very sensitive and easily stressed, increasing their susceptibility to disease.

The symptoms listed above are typical of what dogs may experience in the acute phase of each of these diseases.

With Ehrlichiosis, affected dogs may later enter a chronic carrier phase which may last several years. During this stage, dogs appear clinically healthy, but red blood cell, white blood cell, and platelet counts remain below normal levels.

These carrier animals may be a dangerous source of infection for other dogs. Of equal concern, these carrier dogs can develop a more severe phase of Ehrlichiosis if they suddenly become stressed or immuno-suppressed due to other illnesses, harsh environments, or the use of certain immunosuppressive drugs.

Carrier dogs are considered walking time bombs!!

Once the dog goes beyond the carrier state and reaches the severe chronic phase, the disease becomes very difficult and costly to treat.

Canine Ehrlichiosis can easily be diagnosed by the IFA test used at Protatek Reference Lab

Treatment of Canine Ehrlichiosis consists of tetracycline drugs or their derivatives. Usually dogs in the early acute phase require only 2-3 weeks of treatment, whereas chronically affected dogs require treatment for 6 weeks or longer. In many cases, supportive therapy in the form of i.v. fluids and blood transfusions is also required.

In addition to tick bites, Babesiosis can be transmitted through blood transfusions as well as trans-placentally, if the blood donors or dams are chronic carriers. Infections are most severe in dogs which become infected as puppies and young adult dogs (<2 years).

Dogs two years or older generally develop an asymptomatic carrier state. Likewise puppies infected in-utero remain carriers if untreated. Carrier dogs may also develop clinical Babesiosis if their immune systems are compromised. Carrier dogs can spread infection at an alarming rate if used as blood donors or for breeding purposes.

Serology provides a highly accurate and reliable method for the detection of all stages of Canine Babesiosis. The IFA test is the most specific and sensitive method available.

Two drugs have been determined to be effective against *Babesia canis* infections: Diminazene aceturate and Imidocarb dipropionate. Diminazene aceturate is still not readily available in the US due to lack of FDA approval. In 1997, Imidocarb dipropionate finally received FDA approval for use against Canine Babesiosis in the US. The drug is now readily available to licensed veterinarians through Schering Animal Health.

Two additional tick-borne diseases which Greyhound owners should be aware of are Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF, *Rickettsia rickettsii*) and Lyme (*Borrelia burgdorferi*) disease. Cases of RMSF are most prevalent in the eastern half of the United States, but also occur in the West. Symptoms of RMSF are similar to those listed above for Ehrlichiosis. Likewise the disease is treated with tetracyclines.

Lyme disease is also characterized by many of the same symptoms listed above. Signs of chronic Lyme disease consist of recurrent, intermittent arthritis. Neurologic symptoms and kidney disorders may also develop. Amoxicillin or doxycycline are the drugs of choice for treatment of this disease.

Protatek Reference Lab uses the IFA test for diagnosis of both RMSF and Lyme disease.

Humans are also susceptible to infection with certain strains of these four disease agents, if bitten by infected ticks.

Aside from the above tick-borne diseases, Greyhounds which have spent time in the southwest or western US should also be tested for an insidious fungal disease known as Valley Fever (*Coccidioides immitis*). Clinical signs are variable and progressive and may include coughing, lethargy, weight loss, lameness, blindness, and/or neurological disorders. Protatek's diagnostic test is able to determine whether an infected dog has a localized infection or if dissemination throughout the body has occurred. Several Imidazole drugs are effective against the disease, which usually requires a longer treatment schedule than those mentioned above.

For more information about diagnosing these diseases and their treatment, consult your veterinarian.

Protatek Reference Lab is uniquely specialized in the diagnosis of tick-borne diseases. Our staff consists of individuals with long-term scientific/University experience with such

diseases. Because of our concern for the Greyhound breed, Protatek has established a panel with a special discounted fee for the testing of tick-borne diseases, as well as Valley Fever.

Thank you for choosing Protatek Reference Lab. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to give us a call at 480.545.8499.

Updated 16 September 2008