

courtesy of Stable Talk

Whether you blame it on climate change, increased deer numbers, movement of horses for sport and pleasure — or all the above — the fact remains that Lyme disease in horses is on the rise.

Named for the town in Connecticut where it was first diagnosed in the mid-1970s, Lyme disease is one of the three main tick-borne diseases that can infect horses. Equine piroplasmiasis and Anaplasmosis are the other two. Humans, dogs and cats can also be affected by Lyme disease.

It's worth noting that, although some people refer to it as "Lyme's" disease, this is incorrect.

Transmission

Lyme disease is transmitted by ticks carrying *Borrelia burgdorferi*, an infective organism known as a spirochete that is specifically found in the tick species *Ixodes scapularis* (black-legged tick) and *Ixodes pacificus* (western black-legged tick), both of which are commonly referred to as "deer ticks."

"Where ticks are active year-round, then transmission can be year-round, but as tick 'questing' activity intensifies [in the spring], transmission is reported as increased," notes Eric Lockwood Swinebroad, DVM, Dipl. ACVIM. A board-certified equine internist, Swinebroad was one of seven specialist co-authors of the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine consensus statement "Borrelia burgdorferi Infection and Lyme Disease in North American Horses."

"If it takes weeks for antibody levels to rise, and if the disease is in fact due to the host immune response to the spirochete, then it could take weeks for signs to be seen," says Swinebroad, who operates Newmarket/Indialantic Equine, a sport horse practice specializing internal medicine and lameness based in New Hampshire and serving clients throughout New England, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Texas and Florida.

"The Northeast, Upper Midwest and California-Pacific Northwest are considered endemic regions," notes Swinebroad, adding that Florida is likely in that grouping as well as a "transient epicenter" due to all the horse show travel in and out of that state.

June 2021 - Lyme Disease in Horses

Written by courtesy of Stable Talk
Thursday, 27 May 2021 21:48

