



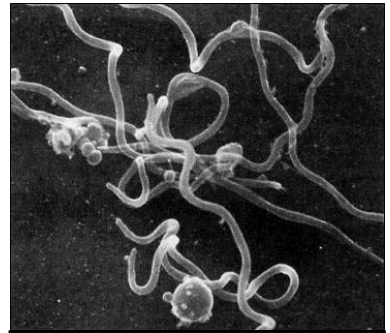
WHAT DOES A POSITIVE LYME TEST MEAN?

Today your dog tests positive for Lyme disease on the IDEXX 4Dx test. What does this mean?

Does my dog have Lyme Disease?

Not necessarily. Studies have indicated that a large number of dogs can test positive for Lyme on this test, showing natural exposure to *Borrelia burgdorferi* (the bacteria responsible for Lyme disease) and yet never show symptoms. **A positive test means your dog has been exposed to the Lyme bacteria, but does not mean your dog has Lyme disease.**

The best way to think about this is to consider if you ever had chicken pox as a child (or know somebody who did). If a human being contracted chicken pox as a child, a test looking for serum antibodies against the chicken pox virus performed on that person 20 years later would be positive. That positive test does not mean the person has chicken pox, it only shows they were exposed to it at some point in their life. The 4Dx test does basically the same thing.



Borrelia burgdorferi, the bacteria that causes Lyme disease

If my dog was exposed to Lyme, do I need to worry that it could become “active?”

The cause of the positive test— historical exposure— is unlikely to result in active Lyme disease in the future. A dog that tested positive, say, six months ago, that becomes sick with Lyme disease symptoms is probably not sick because of that positive test. More likely, that dog was bitten by a deer tick and re-infected two to four months prior to onset of symptoms, and for whatever reason, this time the infection caused symptoms.

Will my dog ever be negative on this test?

There isn't a clear answer to this question, but the best answer is probably not.

If my dog is positive but doesn't have active disease, what good does it do to screen for Lyme?

A positive test means your dog is being exposed to and bitten by deer ticks that have the bacteria. We strongly recommend the use of tick preventatives and possibly Lyme vaccination in dogs that are being exposed to the disease.

We strongly advocate oral tick preventatives such as Bravecto or Nexgard. They kill ticks very quickly, do not leave skin residues, and retain good concentration in the skin for the duration of the treatment period. We have found they are generally superior at tick prevention to any topical agent.

If your dog is positive and will likely continue to encounter ticks, you may wish to vaccinate against the disease. The vaccine is very effective and safe. It is a two-booster series initially, then given yearly.

What are the symptoms of and treatment for Lyme disease?

Dogs with Lyme disease tend to get sick very acutely. They are normal one evening and then seem to become ill overnight. They will refuse to eat, run a fever, and generally have joint pain in multiple joints. The wrist joints are the most commonly affected joints, though any joint can become inflamed.

Treatment is actually quite simple in dogs. A very short course of anti-inflammatory drugs will reduce the joint pain and the dog is started on an antibiotic for a month. Most dogs respond very quickly to the antibiotics and are back to normal by the next day. A majority of dogs show no long-term effects of the disease, which is quite different from humans.

A small number of dogs can develop complications with their kidneys when they become ill. Prognosis is guarded when this develops. This happens fairly rarely.