

FRIENDS OF DOGS/PRIJATELJI PASA FACT SHEET 3



CONTROL OF INSECT-BORNE DISEASES

Here is a very quick guide for dog owners and potential dog owners to a couple of the commonest insect borne diseases in Montenegro.

Lyme disease

A common disease caused by ticks, parasites that attach themselves to dogs, feed on blood and

transmit diseases directly into the dog's system. Your dog may not show signs of the disease until several months after infection. Symptoms include:

- stiffness
- lameness
- swollen joints
- loss of appetite
- fever and fatigue.

Canine Ehrlichiosis

Found worldwide, this is another common and dangerous tick-borne disease known to infect dogs. It is caused by a bacteria, and symptoms may not surface for months after transmission, and can include

- fever
- loss of appetite
- depression
- weight loss
- runny eyes and nose
- nose bleeds
- swollen limbs.

Lyme disease and ehrlichiosis can also affect humans, so if you are bitten by a tick keep an eye on the bite site and if you develop a bulls eye red ring around it, which gets bigger, or if you develop flu like symptoms, nausea or confusion, then get to a doctor immediately for antibiotics.

Leishmaniasis

Transmitted to dogs by a tiny sand-fly. When an infected sand-fly bites a dog, the dog is in danger of contracting the disease. Using a preventative collar such as a scabior collar (available from the vet) between April and October will help prevent leishmaniasis. Many dogs carry the disease but show no symptoms until it has progressed to a chronic and more dangerous stage. Leishmaniasis cannot currently be cured, but it can be treated if it is

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diagnosed early enough, and the sooner the condition is diagnosed, the more successful the treatment is. Weak or sick dogs with poor immune systems (like street dogs) are more likely to become seriously ill. The commonest symptoms are:

- weight loss
- anaemia and lethargy
- hair loss and skin lesions, particularly around the face and ears
- “dandruff” or flaky skin in the coat
- long and thick claws
- lameness.

There is simply no way for pet owners to tell if a tick or sand-fly is carrying disease or not, and it only takes one bite to infect your dog. Symptoms can be vague and difficult to recognize, so many pet owners don't know their dog is suffering from a debilitating disease until it's too late. The key to curing any tick-borne disease is early diagnosis and treatment. If you are worried, your vet should be able to do some simple tests to determine if your dog has one of these diseases. Several broad- spectrum antibiotics to treat tick-borne disease are generally effective, especially in the early stages of the disease. The longer the dog has been infected, the more serious the illness is, and the more complicated the treatment. In chronic cases it may be untreatable.

Prevention

Numerous products and medications to prevent ticks and sand-fly bites are available from the vet. These include drops like Frontline that you administer monthly and collars that dogs wear for the whole sand-fly season. You should also check your dog and yourself for ticks daily during tick season, mainly spring and early summer in Montenegro. The longer ticks are embedded, the more likely they are to pass on diseases. Brush your fingers through the fur, applying enough pressure to feel any small bumps. If you feel a bump, pull the fur apart to identify it. An embedded tick will vary in size, from a pinhead to a grape (see picture below). Ticks are usually black or dark brown or grey when they are full. Depending on the size and location of the tick, its legs may also be visible. Check on the internet or ask your vet for advice about the method for removing ticks.

