



Blastomycosis

Blastomycosis is a very serious disease caused by a fungus. This fungus is present in moist soil and is everywhere in the Ohio River valley. Dogs are much more susceptible to blastomycosis than are cats or humans. The most commonly affected dog, due to their lifestyle, is an outdoor, large breed, sporting-type male. Any dog, however, can get blastomycosis, merely by living in the Ohio River valley.

Dogs become infected with blastomycosis by inhaling the fungus from the soil. It can then infect the lungs, eyes, bones, central nervous system or skin. Signs the animal may show are coughing, fever, weight loss, anorexia, painful eyes, lameness or skin lesions. Each dog will present a little differently. It is not contagious from dog to dog or from dog to people.

The diagnosis of blastomycosis is based on the clinical signs, radiographs (x-rays) and blood tests. In recent years, a new test performed on urine has made the diagnosis of blastomycosis a lot easier and much, much faster, (which in turn, may save lives.)

The treatment for blastomycosis requires prolonged therapy with antifungal medication. One of the drugs is amphotericin B. This drug is given intravenously on an alternating day schedule. This drug can cause kidney damage so assessing kidney function before and throughout treatment is imperative. Amphotericin B is reserved for profoundly sick pets that need antifungal therapy immediately. Once they are stable, oral antifungals can be used. The two oral formulations that are used to treat blastomycosis are itraconazole or fluconazole. Oral medication is given for 2-3 months. Side effects include anorexia, vomiting and also liver dysfunction.

As you can see, blastomycosis is a very serious disease that needs aggressive treatment. Even with treatment, not every dog will survive. The expense for caring for a dog with blastomycosis can exceed \$750.00 - \$1000.00.

The prognosis for a dog with blastomycosis is always guarded at the beginning of treatment. Dogs that have eye involvement may be blind as a result. Dogs that respond well, however, and are free of disease at one year are considered cured.