

Vets urged to look out for lungworm

Research indicates that nearly three-quarters of Irish and UK vets (74%) have experienced a case of lungworm in their practice, or have heard of a case occurring locally, in the past 12 months. A new campaign is urging vets to encourage monthly lungworm preventative treatment and avoid the tragedy of losing an animal, as this update from Bayer outlines



In a continuing effort to chart the spread of lungworm (*Angiostrongylus vasorum*) vets have reported more than 100 incidences to Bayer since February.¹ Tragically, at least six of these cases resulted in death, showing this is still a key threat to dogs across much of Ireland and the UK, with fatal cases including a 13-week old puppy.¹ The reports show that, of the incidences recorded, 43 practices reported that this case was not the first experienced.¹ With no requirement for compulsory reporting, it is estimated that many other cases are likely to have gone undocumented. This growing spread of reported cases adds to the increasing base of evidence that lungworm is endemic throughout much of Ireland and the UK and continues to pose a significant threat to dogs. Recent studies have highlighted the high prevalence rate of lungworm in foxes in Ireland, confirming that the parasite is endemic in Ireland and the overall prevalence is the second highest in

Europe.²

The incidence of infection was found to be 39.9% with positive samples occurring in each of the country's 26 counties.² The study highlights the potential exposure of the Irish dog population and the high risk of cross-infection.

SLUG AND SNAIL POPULATIONS HIGH

Biodiversity and conservation officer for the Natural History Museum, London, Professor Fred Naggs, said: "An increase in the number of slug and snail populations this year would suggest there will consequently be a continued spread of the parasite. However, this depends on a number of factors:

- (i) the number of slugs and snails around last year, of which there were many;
- (ii) the level of precipitation throughout the year, as slugs and snails will breed continuously when temperatures are

mild to warm and there is adequate relative humidity; and (iii) the survival of slugs and snails over the winter. As this winter has not been particularly harsh, reasonable numbers of slugs and snails have survived."

A VASORUM IN IRELAND

Recent research by Bayer confirms that nearly three-quarters of Irish vets have experienced a case of lungworm in their practice, or have heard of a case occurring locally, in the past 12 months. One in four also believes that cases of lungworm have increased in their area over the past five years.³

Although *A vasorum* is considered endemic in Ireland, and anecdotally is confined to the east coast, recent studies of canine angiostrongylosis in Irish dogs confirmed the parasite is not uncommon in Ireland and not confined to specific parts of the country, such as the east coast.⁴

CONFUSING SYMPTOMS CAN LEAD TO DELAY IN TREATMENT

Dogs that have picked up a lungworm infection can show a number of different symptoms, including breathing difficulties, a lack of energy, coughing and persistent bleeding. However, the clinical signs can be varied and some dogs may appear healthy in the early stages

of infection. This is why the Act Against Lungworm campaign is urging vets to encourage monthly lungworm preventative treatment and avoid the tragedy of losing an animal. Prevention, which stops larval shedding, will also help limit the geographical spread of the disease. Gavin McAulay, a cardiorespiratory specialist at New Priory Vets, Brighton, UK, said: "With often confusing symptoms, the clinical judgement of vets is key in ensuring an animal is diagnosed and treated against lungworm as soon as possible. In many scenarios, lungworm should be a consideration to be assessed in the background while investigating other conditions, however monthly prevention is key. There is evidence, with other parasite diseases that suggests the more animals you treat the better the protection for other animals in the local area." Donna Tomlinson, senior product manager for Advocate, an endectocide, said: "With the continued spread of lungworm in Ireland and the UK, it is important to ensure that our 2017 Act Against Lungworm campaign resonates with local communities. We have the case studies to show that lungworm has been reported, but we rely on the support of vets to help get the message out locally. "This year we are putting local vets at the centre of our communications, with dedicated campaigns planned in every region. This is a great opportunity for practices to get involved in a local media campaign, talk about their first-hand experiences with the parasite and encourage pet owners to visit them for advice on preventative treatment."

VETS URGED TO REPORT CASES OF LUNGWORM

Vets can report cases to their local Bayer veterinary business manager or practices can log their own incidences directly by emailing Bayer. Act Against Lungworm vet campaign materials are available for practices to display in waiting rooms, as well as leaflets to assist practitioners in communicating to dog owners the importance of protecting their pet against lungworm. These can be ordered via the Bayer Vet Centre.

REFERENCES

1. Based on number of cases reported to Bayer by veterinary practices in the UK and Ireland since February 2017
2. McCarthy G, Ferrand M, Waal T, Zintl A. Parasitology 2016; 143: 588-593. Published with the permission of Cambridge University Press
3. Survey of 300 UK and Ireland vets, conducted by Bryter in March 2017
4. Gallagher B, Brennan SF, Zarelli M, Mooney CT. Geographical, clinical, clinicopathological and radiographic features of canine angiostrongylosis in Irish dogs: a retrospective study. Irish Veterinary Journal 2012; 65(5) [doi: 10.1186/2046-0481-65-5. (2015) 142(9):1190-6]

Veterinary Ireland Financial Services Ltd.

Specialist Financial Advisors to the Veterinary Profession

- Pre & Post Retirement Planning
- Personal & Business Protection
- Tax Efficient Entry & Exit Strategies
- Savings & Investments
- Home, Practice, Motor, Travel & Health Insurance
- Free Financial Reviews

We make financial planning simple

Declan Gahan

Senior Financial Advisor
Mobile: 086 777 02 83
E-mail: declan@vetireland.ie

Mary Goodman

Senior Financial Advisor
Mobile: 086 777 02 86
E-mail: mary@vetireland.ie

T: 01 457 79 87 | E: finance@vetireland.ie | W: www.veterinaryireland.ie
Veterinary Ireland Financial Services Limited is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.