

# Golden Retriever Rescue of Wisconsin, Inc.

Refresher on Tickborne Diseases

GRRoW Hotline: 888-655-4753

## Refresher On Tickborne Diseases

By Dr. Ron Beatty, D.V.M.

My Pet's Vet, LLC

Tickborne disease is a significant issue in Wisconsin. Many of us go hiking, camping, visit dog parks and go up north. Even if you do not do these things your pet may be still at risk. Wildlife can carry and attract ticks to your own yard. Your vet can help you assess your pet's risk.

Ticks carry diseases that both pets and people can contract. In Wisconsin, Lyme Disease and Anaplasmosis are common. Pets often seem to have higher risk because they like to sniff the long grass and brush where ticks lie in wait for their next meal. Prevention is the key. Vaccinating dogs for Lyme and applying Frontline monthly to dogs and cats is the gold standard of prevention. This plan will *greatly* decrease your pet's risk. In southern Wisconsin, we often start applying Frontline in March and finish by applying the last dose November first. In spring, as soon as we get warm sunny days above 40-50 degrees the ticks are out looking for their next blood meal. Frontline with fipronil has a well studied safety record for pets and their owners. I highly recommend *against* over the counter products with permethrins, pyrethrins, or other chemicals, because of their well known toxicity issues for all mammals—pets and people alike. Some products like permethrins will kill cats. Please do not use over-the-counter products for your family's safety. Ask your veterinarian for recommendations on safe and effective tick products.



Once pets contract a tick borne disease they will likely carry it for life. It may not always be active, but it has the potential to come out of dormancy at anytime. I have a veterinary colleague who has had Anaplasmosis for several years. Periodically, it will come out of dormancy and cause him multiple physical problems. It can be this way for pets, too. The symptoms of disease are vague: see the table. Permanent joint damage and pain or kidney disease is also possible. If the disease is active it can be treated with antibiotics. After treatment, the disease generally hides in a dormant state. It may go dormant for months to years. In some instances, the diseases can kill. However, most of the time tickborne disease just destroys the individual's quality of life and does not kill.

It is important to know if a pet is carrying Lyme or Anaplasmosis even if they seem healthy. Why? Again, if a pet is a carrier, a tickborne disease can come out of hiding at any time. The signs previously mentioned can indicate many other diseases as well. This can make diagnosis of an active infection challenging *and* time consuming. Ideally, we need to treat active tickborne disease quickly, before it causes permanent damage of joints or kidneys—or death. So, progressive veterinarians are now screening for these tick borne diseases to identify carriers before their disease becomes active. The tests



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are simple, fast and relatively inexpensive. Your vet can easily do it when your pet is routinely screened for heartworm disease. The lab test is called the Snap 4Dx by Idexx Laboratories. It checks for heartworm, Lyme, and Anaplasmosis all at one time, in a few minutes, with only a few drops of blood!

### Some common signs of infection:

- Lameness
- Fever
- Swollen joints
- “Not himself/herself”
- Loss of appetite
- Lack of energy
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Drinking/urinating more

Clearly, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure regarding tick borne diseases. In Wisconsin, these diseases are very common in people and pets. While we can not completely do away with a pet's risk, we can *greatly* reduce it with prevention. Secondly, ask your vet to routinely screen your pet for tickborne diseases during heartworm testing. We know there are countless dogs that have been infected and are undiagnosed. If your pet is found to be a carrier it will dramatically help your vet diagnose and treat your dog in the future. A pet can live a full life with tickborne disease with your vet's help. Be proactive with your pet's healthcare and enjoy Wisconsin!

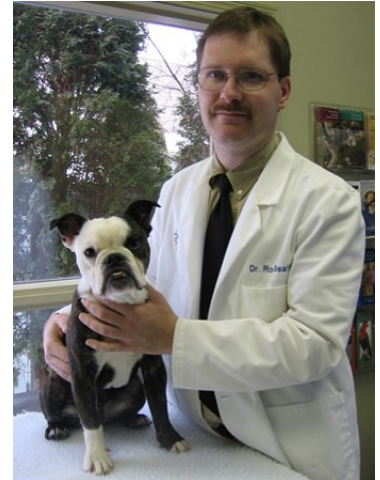
Dr. Beatty cares for Golden Retrievers and other pets in Mequon, Wisconsin. [MyPetsVetMequon.Com](http://MyPetsVetMequon.Com)

### About Dr. Beatty:

Dr. Beatty graduated from the University of Wisconsin Madison [School of Veterinary Medicine](#) in 2001. Veterinary school is just as difficult to enter and is equally as challenging as medical school. He focused on exotic pets as well as cats and dogs. In order to properly care for pets his education never stops. Dr. Beatty regularly attends [continuing education](#) events so he can learn new medical and surgical skills to benefit our patients.

Since graduation he has worked in the greater Milwaukee area. He enjoys seeing all companion animals-dogs, cats, birds, reptiles, rabbits, ferrets, chinchillas, guinea pigs, sugar gliders and other small mammals. His clients especially appreciate his gentle nature with their pets. Dr. Beatty is still amazed by the deep bond that people share with pets. One of his greatest joys in life is to care for animals.

In his free time, Dr. Beatty enjoys gardening, home handyman projects, going to the Menomonee Falls dog park, and reading.



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