



Acton Animal Hospital  
Acton, MA  
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# Pet Care News

Spring/Summer 2010



## Importance of 4DX Snap Screening Test



The 4DX snap screening test allows your veterinarian to assess your pet for exposure to three common tick-borne diseases and heartworm infection, which is a mosquito-borne disease. This test can be run at our hospital and only takes 8 minutes to complete. Ideally your dog should be tested annually but sometimes more frequent testing may be recommended by your veterinarian.

Should your pet be positive for Anaplasma or Ehrlichia (two common tick-borne diseases), your veterinarian may recommend a complete blood count (CBC) be performed. This is to quantify the white blood count, the red blood count, and the platelet count all of which can be affected by infection with these diseases. Results from the CBC may help determine whether treatment with Doxycycline is advised and if there are any health concerns that need closer monitoring.

Should your pet be positive for Lyme disease, your veterinarian may recommend a Lyme Quantitative C6 antibody test. This test provides a numeric value to the submitted blood sample. If the level is greater than 30, treatment is recommended. A recheck test six months later should show a numeric value that is reduced by 50% or more than the first value if the pet was effectively treated. If your pet tests positive for Ehrlichia or Lyme disease, your vet may also suggest a chemistry profile and urinalysis test be performed since other organ systems (i.e. kidney and liver) may be affected by these infections.

## Selecting a Pet's Breed



Selecting a cat or dog breed is an important decision process. The potential pet owner should take into account the reality of his or her daily life style and try to select a pet that really is a good fit with that lifestyle. Here are three steps to help you find the right pet.

### Step 1

First, would a cat or dog or another pet be the best fit? If a person or family has a really busy schedule, would a pet such as a cat be a better choice than a more work intensive pet such as a dog. Dogs require daily time outside and some breeds require a lot of exercise time on a daily basis. While cats need a pet owner's attention and daily care and affection, they often may not require the amount of time a dog needs.

### Step 2

After deciding on an appropriate pet species, the next step is selecting a cat or dog breed that will prove to be mutually beneficial for the pet and the pet owner. Do you live in an apartment or on a farm? Do you spend most of your day away from home or are you home much of the time? Do you live alone or with a family or a group of people? Would you enjoy a very active pet or would you prefer a calmer, less active pet? Will a pet's temperament be suitable to your lifestyle? Some cat breeds and dog breeds are very sociable but others prefer just bonding to one or two people and might be shy and fearful in a socially active household.

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### Step 3

The expense of owning various breeds should be researched before selecting a breed. How often will the pet need brushing, combing, or clipping? Are there special health care costs associated with the selected breed? What costs may be anticipated for properly feeding and caring for your selected pet? Consider the cost of medical care, boarding, day care or walking fees and the cost of activities you plan to share with your pet.

A little time spent researching your pet's breed will assure that you have made a wise selection and provide you and your pet with enjoyable time together.



### Important Spring Tips!

- **Keep up with vaccines**

With warmer weather, more pets are now outside.

- **Ticks are back**

Remember to apply Frontline on cats and dogs, or Advantix (on dogs only).

- **Cars are heating up in the sun**

Leave your pet in his comfortable home instead of taking him along on errands.

## Tick-Borne Diseases

The warm Spring weather has brought with it a bumper crop of ticks. They start feeding as soon as temperatures stay above freezing and the ground is warmed by the stronger sunlight. The various tick species in our area carry numerous diseases. The most common diseases affecting our pets are Lyme disease, Ehrlichia, Anaplasma, and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. Dogs are most commonly infected but cats may become infected as well.

It generally takes exposure for more than 24 hours for the diseases to be transmitted from the tick to the host. This means that preventing tick bites and/or removing attached ticks promptly can prevent infection. A good flea/tick treatment product—such as those we recommend at Acton Animal Hospital—properly applied can help prevent exposure and are both safe for your pet and those people in close contact with your pet. Careful haircoat tick-checking of your pet and yourself after exposure to tick-infested environments are also important in preventing tick-borne disease.

Dogs may receive vaccination to protect against Lyme disease, however vaccines to protect against other tick diseases are not yet available. The incubation period (time from exposure to when symptoms appear) can be weeks to months. Screening tests are done annually for dogs to determine exposure to three of the most common tick-borne diseases. Based on these test results and a physical exam along with the history of certain symptoms that your pet may be exhibiting, your veterinarian may recommend appropriate treatment and continued monitoring tests.

Remember that some of these infections (especially Lyme and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever) are also serious problems in people. If you walk in areas that are tick infested, take precautions to avoid being bitten.

We are still learning more about these various tick-borne diseases but we now know they are probably here to stay in our local environment. We will need to be proactive in preventing and treating these diseases for our pets and for ourselves.

## Common Garden Toxins

Despite how beautiful and lovely our gardens and plants may be they can be harmful and even deadly to our household pets if ingested. It's important to be mindful of what's in our gardens and our pet's whereabouts.

### Autumn Crocus

- Causes severe vomiting, gastrointestinal bleeding, liver and kidney damage, and/or shock

### Kalanchoe

- Causes vomiting, diarrhea
- Can cause heart arrhythmia
- Will see neurological signs



#### **Azalea**

- Causes vomiting, diarrhea
- Animals will drool, and can go into a coma or even die

#### **Oleander**

- Causes severe vomiting, abnormal heart rate, and/or weakness
- May cause shock or death

#### **Hyacinth/Tulip Bulbs**

- Causes severe vomiting, diarrhea, and drooling

#### **Cyclamen**

- Causes severe vomiting, drooling, and/or diarrhea
- Can cause heart arrhythmias

#### **Sago Plant**

- Causes vomiting
- You may see bloody stools
- Can cause damage to the stomach lining and/or liver failure
- May even cause death

#### **Daffodil Bulbs**

- Causes severe vomiting, diarrhea, and/or abdominal pain
- May cause abnormal heart rate or changes in respiration

#### **Lilies**

- Very Toxic to cats
- Can cause severe kidney failure

#### **Insect Bait & Garden fertilizer**

It's important to keep this away from pets access as these too can have poisonous, harmful and even fatal effects.

“  
*Keep these*

*poisonous,*  
*harmful, and even*

*fatal substances*

*away from*  
”  
*pets.*

## Reminders!

- Call ahead to refill any prescription medications for your pet.
- Call ahead to reorder any prescription pet foods before your pet's food runs out. Hills Food is ordered every Monday, and Royal Canin, Purina, and Iams on the 1st and 15th of every month.
- Remember to schedule a physical exam yearly for your pet even if all vaccinations are up-to-date.
- Important: A rabies certificate is required for treatment at Animal Emergency Care. Keep it in a handy place so you can “grab and go.”