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New CDC Study Based on Proprietary CAPC Data Links Incidence of Lyme Disease in Dogs to Increased Risk to Humans

BEL AIR, Md. (September 1, 2011) – Using data from unique prevalence maps provided by the Companion Animal Parasite Council (CAPC, www.capcvet.org), scientists with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have found that people in areas with a higher-than-average number of dogs with Lyme disease are at greater risk of contracting the disease.

Researchers recently published their findings in a study, “Canine Serology as Adjunct to Human Lyme Disease,” that cross-referenced data from the CAPC prevalence maps and U.S. national surveillance data on the occurrence of Lyme disease in humans. Results show that when few dogs in a given area test positive for Lyme disease, the risk to humans for contracting the disease is low. Conversely, the study also shows that the more dogs that test positive for the disease in a given area, the higher the risk of disease is to people.

The prevalence maps, available exclusively from the CAPC, show the incidence of reported Lyme disease cases (see screen capture). Additional maps track the incidence of a variety of other parasite-borne diseases in both cats and dogs. Visitors to the CAPC website can search for canine or feline infection rate results by state, county and type of parasite.

“Veterinarians throughout the United States and our industry colleagues worked hard for many years to provide this incredibly compelling data, which essentially shows how tracking the incidence of Lyme in dogs allows researchers to predict possible outbreaks of the disease in humans,” said Susan Little, DVM, PhD, a director with the CAPC. “It is clear that public health benefits from our efforts and expertise.”

Specific findings include:

- Human Lyme disease incidence was effectively zero when the canine seroprevalence was ≤ 1.3 percent.
- Among 14 states with canine seroprevalence > 5 percent, median annual human Lyme disease incidence was about 100-fold higher (24.1 cases/100,000 population) and positively correlated with canine seroprevalence.

“The prevalence maps and this study itself represent the strong industry collaboration that the CAPC creates,” said Little. “It is amazing when you realize that our pets are serving as sentinels, showing us where we are at risk for disease. It is a powerful demonstration of the strength and importance of the human-animal bond.”

The prevalence maps on the CAPC website include data for 2008, 2009 and 2010, presented in both absolute numbers and percentage of positive results. The maps combine data from two major national laboratories and format it in a county-by-county illustration of the prevalence of selected parasites and vector-transmitted diseases. The CAPC plans to expand the data it collects through its Partnership Program and make the information accessible to its partner practices in the near future.

According to Little, the study’s findings underscore the importance of educating pet owners about the risks of parasite-borne disease to both pets and their families. The CAPC, guided by its mission to improve both human and animal health, is an objective and reliable source of information on parasites and zoonotic diseases for both pet owners and veterinarians. The prevalence maps are an essential tool in helping the nonprofit achieve its educational goals.

“Veterinarians can find useful data and tools from the CAPC to help educate pet owners about parasite-borne diseases. This, in turn, allows veterinarians to play a central role in helping pet owners protect their pets and their families,” said Little.

About the Companion Animal Parasite Council (CAPC)

The Companion Animal Parasite Council (www.capcvet.org) is an independent nonprofit comprised of parasitologists, veterinarians, medical, public health and other professionals that provides information for the optimal control of internal and external parasites that threaten the health of pets and people. Formed in 2002, the CAPC works to help veterinary professionals and pet owners develop the best practices in parasite management that protect pets from parasitic infections and reduce the risk of zoonotic parasite transmission.

About Dr. Susan Little

Dr. Susan Little is a professor and the Krull-Ewing endowed chair in veterinary parasitology at the Center for Veterinary Health Sciences, Oklahoma State University, where she teaches veterinary parasitology and oversees a research program that focuses on zoonotic parasites and tick-borne diseases.

She received her bachelor’s degree from Cornell University, her DVM from the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine at Virginia Tech, and her PhD in veterinary parasitology from University of Georgia’s College of Veterinary Medicine. She is a Diplomate of the European Veterinary Parasitology College, an emeritus board member of the Companion Animal Parasite Council and past president of the American Association of Veterinary Parasitologists.

Dr. Little has served on the editorial boards of *Veterinary Parasitology*, *Veterinary Therapeutic* and the *Journal of Wildlife Diseases*, and has authored more than 100 publications on veterinary and human parasites, with an emphasis on zoonotic parasites and tick-borne disease agents. Her laboratory has received research support from the National Institutes of Health, private foundations and the veterinary health industry.

She is also an outstanding professor who has been recognized for parasitology teaching excellence at the class, college, university and national level. Dr. Little has twice been awarded an Excellence in Teaching Award from the national Student American Veterinary Medical Association (SAVMA).

Attachment:

Figure 1: Screen Capture of the Prevalence Maps from www.capcvet.org

Caption:

The prevalence maps on the CAPC Web site (www.capcvet.org) allow viewers to search for the prevalence of parasite-borne disease in either dogs or cats, by state, county and type of parasite. The maps are based upon data from two major national laboratories, which is then formatted in a county-by-county illustration of the prevalence of selected parasites and vector-transmitted diseases.