Valley Fever (Coccidioidomycosis) in Dogs

Valley fever is caused by a fungus that lives in the soil primarily in the southwestern US. When dirt is disturbed, spores are released into the air and inhaled by the dog. The infection starts in the lungs but it may spread to other body systems. The spores can spread for miles in the wind, so any dog in the endemic area is at risk of infection.





Map courtesy of the CDC

Symptoms of Valley fever in dogs

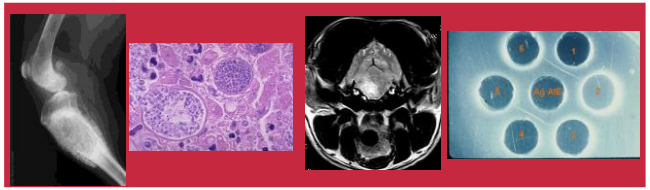
General
- Fever
- Low appetite
- Lethargy
- Weight loss

Respiratory disease
- Cough
- Rapid breathing
- Wheezing/strenuous breathing
- Difficulty swallowing

Disseminated disease

Symptoms depend on the organ system affected
- Lameness/pain/bone swelling
- Non-healing wounds
- Swollen testicle
- Changes in vision
- Seizures

To diagnose Valley fever, your veterinarian will consider
- Travel history
- Physical examination findings
- Bloodwork results
- Valley fever blood test (titer)
- X-rays



Complicated cases may require advanced imaging (CT or MRI), biopsy, or culture.

The titer test looks for antibodies in your dog's blood. Positive samples are diluted and retested. The highest positive dilution is the titer result. This test takes several days to run.

Researchers are developing faster and more sensitive tests.

Most dogs are treated at home with an oral antifungal drug
- Fluconazole
- Itraconazole
- Voriconazole
- Posaconazole

There are pros and cons to each drug. Your veterinarian will choose the best antifungal for your dog.



Some very sick dogs require hospitalization for supportive care. For life-threatening illness, an IV drug (amphotericin B) may be recommended.

Key points

- The fungus is not contagious dog to dog or dog to human
- Disseminated disease can occur without any signs of the initial lung infection
- Treatment can be prolonged
- The decision to stop medication should be made with your veterinarian
- Relapsing disease can occur and is impossible to predict

Valley fever in dogs

Valley fever vaccine update

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