

Please take note:

Blastomycosis is a systemic fungal infection; the fungal spores are inhaled into the lungs. Spores are capable of entering the bloodstream through a contaminated puncture in the skin as well. It appears in only certain geographical areas. The fungal growth is supported by wet, sandy, acidic soils rich in organic matter, which is why it is found in valleys and seen most frequently near water. It simply lives in our soil, and most certainly in Illinois and Wisconsin. People, dogs and cats are susceptible to it; dogs in particular. Sporting breeds are especially prone since their exposure is greater. It is not contagious; you need to have direct exposure to the pathogen.

Its incubation period is 5 to 12 weeks. Some animals don't show clinical signs for a long time after being infected. Signs of illness will depend on what organs are infected. Some dogs have eye problems, lameness (involves bones), central nervous system problems, urogenital system issues or skin lesions. Signs can include coughing, shortness of breath, fever (103 degrees or higher) that does not respond to antibiotics, lethargy, lack of appetite and lack of thirst.

Radar, our 5-year old GSP, was in perfect health. In October we assumed he had the flu, then he became lame and was tested for Lyme disease. Antibiotics did not alleviate his temperature of 103 degrees. It took several visits to the vet for a definitive diagnosis. Blasto is treatable with antifungal drugs (expensive) and steroids (limits inflammation). If your dog can live through the first ten days of treatment, you have hit a milestone. A 6-month course of antifungal is recommended to ward off any relapses. Radar would not eat or drink. Initially, we daily administered subcutaneous fluids then alternated days for several weeks. We had to force feed him and gave him water via a syringe; he lost an extreme amount of weight (55 pounds to 41 pounds). He became anorexic and slept most of the time. He was so lame we carried him outside to do his business. A month after he was diagnosed he exhibited eye symptoms. We took him to an animal ophthalmologist; he had a detached retina in one of his eyes and retinal scarring in both. Fortunately his retina has reattached. His sight does not appear to be severely affected. Presently, he is quite close to being a normal dog. We've had him out hunting on two occasions this winter—and relish that fact.

We weathered the above experience, and our hope is that others can avoid it simply by identifying the warning signs early. It could save your dog's life!

Feel free to contact us if you have any questions or future concerns:

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