

Infection suspected in death of suburban dogs



By Alex Keown,
Special to the Tribune

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Veterinarians who treated Mac believe he contracted a bacterial infection called leptospirosis, which took the life of another area dog. (Family Photo)

Mac was a spirited and energetic 4-year-old golden retriever full of zest for life. But all that changed just over a week ago when the dog began to vomit and could no longer urinate. Within a few days Mac was dead.

Although it has yet to be confirmed, veterinarians who treated Mac believe his demise was due to a bacterial infection called leptospirosis, the same infection that took the life of another area dog.

Lake Bluff resident Cindy Fletcher, Mac's owner, said her family became concerned when Mac began to show signs of lethargy, loss of appetite and continual vomiting. They took their dog to a veterinary clinic in Lake Forest before the internal medicine specialists at Doctors Veterinary Specialty Center in Buffalo Grove were called in to care for Mac. Unfortunately, by that point Mac's kidneys were failing, and he had to be euthanized.

"They said it was such an acute case. It happened so fast," Fletcher said.

"This is the time of year when we begin to see cases of suspected lepto," said Dr. Adam Mordecai of Doctors Veterinary Specialty Center. "This is not uncommon to see this. It's a well-known infection."

But this year veterinarians may see a higher number of cases. Mordecai said his colleagues believe they could currently be treating as many as 14 dogs with leptospirosis, however not all the animals have been tested for verification.

Leptospirosis is typically spread through the urine of wildlife, such as rats, squirrels and raccoons. Dogs typically come into contact with the urine either in pools of infected water, soil or grass. Fletcher said Mac was not in any area where there were pools of standing water, but she said there are plenty of small animals such as chipmunks and squirrels in her yard.

Symptoms of leptospirosis include fever, vomiting, pain, diarrhea, a refusal to eat, lethargy, liver or kidney failure and weakness. Leptospirosis can be fatal, but in many cases antibiotics and IV fluids can help defeat the bacteria.

Mordecai said there are multiple strains of leptospirosis. While there is a vaccine, it only covers four of the strains, he said.

"It's sort of like a flu vaccine. It doesn't cover everything," she said.

Mac had been vaccinated for leptospirosis, Fletcher said.

Mordecai said the unusually wet weather the area has seen over the past month may be a factor in the increased number of suspected cases.

"When the ground is more wet it allows the bacteria to stay active longer and become easier to spread. When it's hot outside, the ground dries quickly and the bacteria dies," he said.

Leptospirosis can be transferred between pet and owner, Mordecai said most people tend to not become infected by the bacteria because of typical cleanliness protocols most people employ, such as thoroughly washing hands after cleaning up a dog's waste. However, he said those with autoimmune deficiencies may be susceptible to the bacteria if their pet has become infected.

Fletcher said her daughter has an autoimmune deficiency and she is being checked by her physician for some of the signs of infection, many of which mirror flulike symptoms such as fever, tiredness and vomiting. To cover their bases, Fletcher said each member of her family will be getting tested for the bacteria.

"We'd rather be safe than sorry," she said.

Although the loss of Mac has shaken the family, Fletcher said she hopes other dog owners will use their story as a cautionary tale and watch their animals for signs of the infection.

"I don't want somebody else to have to go through this," Fletcher said.

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OCT. 26, 2014

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OCT. 20, 2014

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Halloween fun for all ages in Lake County

Area park districts and other groups are offering a variety of Halloween activities for all ages.

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› Photos: Halloween fun in Lake County GALLERY

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OCT. 17, 2014

Blotter: Woman strikes officer in Lake Forest

A 59-year-old Lake Bluff man was arrested at 5:54 p.m. Oct. 1 at the scene of an accident on Waukegan Road at Deerpath Road. He was charged with DUI and failure to reduce speed to avoid an accident.

› Suburban Chicago arrest photos



OCT. 20, 2014

School consolidation will cost more than expected, officials say

After projected costs for consolidation came in higher than expected last week, District 112 officials say they need more community guidance to move forward.

› 5 options emerge for District 112 consolidation

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Video: Body of woman recovered from Lake Michigan

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OCT. 16, 2014

Obamacare a flash point in Schneider-Dold race

In recent interviews and political ads, Rep. Brad Schneider has accused his Republican opponent, former Rep. Bob Dold, of voting 28 times to "repeal, defund or dismantle" the Affordable Care Act when he was in Congress.

OCT. 14, 2014

Criminal trespass and damage in Lake Forest

The following were taken from police reports.

OCT. 15, 2014

Girls golf | Lake Forest's Young thrives on the links

Lake Forest junior Emily Young bids her friends adieu as the golf season begins.

OCT. 5, 2014

Blotter: Unpaid taxi driver in Lake Forest

The following items were taken from Lake Forest police reports:

OCT. 3, 2014

Lake Forest looks to retrofit its water plant

Lake Forest's Public Works Committee directed engineering consultant Strand & Associates to evaluate four company proposals for a costly retrofitting of the city water plant with 10-inch membrane filters, now the industry standard.

OCT. 27, 2014

Halloween events around the suburbs

October is the time for haunted houses, fall festivals, scary hayrides and pumpkin-themed everything. We're here to help you scare up a party plan with a list of nearly 70 Halloween and fall events across the suburbs. Listings are subject to change, so please call in advance....

OCT. 1, 2014

Hospira gets warning from FDA over drug manufacturing violations

Hospira said Wednesday it received a warning letter from the Food and Drug Administration after an inspection of its Australian manufacturing facility this year identified "significant violations" of drug manufacturing practices.

SEP. 28, 2014

Blotter: Man charged with trespassing at Lake Forest Hospital

The following were taken from Lake Forest police reports.

SEP. 24, 2014

Schneider, Dold meet up in Lincolnshire

With the Nov. 4 election drawing near, U.S. Rep. Brad Schneider and challenger Bob Dold traded jabs Tuesday night at Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire — their first forum together in the 10th District Congressional race.

SEP. 26, 2014

HomeMade Pizza locations being taken over

Some of the former stores of HomeMade Pizza Co., which abruptly closed in June, are slated to reopen under new ownership and a new name but the same take-and-bake pizza concept.

SEP. 22, 2014

Women of Barat College class of 1964 look back

The ruins of Barat College in Lake Forest were hushed one day recently, save for the distant whine of a lawn mower and the brittle tapping sound of men stacking bricks by hand.

SEP. 25, 2014

Lake Forest to remove another 1,700 ash trees

Lake Forest will remove another 1,700 ash trees this year to battle the severe infestation of emerald ash borer, and has tagged 150 for the state to remove along the Illinois Route 43 corridor.

Galleries (25)

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Photo challenge: Fall into Halloween GALLERY



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SEP. 23, 2014

Boaters protest Highland Park boat launch closure

More than 100 boaters packed a Highland Park City Council meeting on Monday night to protest the proposed closing of the Park Avenue boating facility.

SEP. 21, 2014

Blotter: 400 stolen laptops from school in Lake Forest

A 28-year-old Highwood man was arrested at 9:24 a.m. Sept. 1 on Route 41 at Westleigh Road. He was charged with felony DUI, driving on a suspended license, driving without insurance, improper lane usage and improper transportation of alcohol.

SEP. 21, 2014

Tribune analysis: State school districts relying more on substitute teachers

Illinois schoolchildren are greeted by substitute teachers far more often than their parents were, and while there may be valid reasons for calling in these subs, some experts express concerns about students being shortchanged, a Tribune analysis has found.

OCT. 6, 2014

Forest Park gets thousands of plants — and a new life

When European buckthorn and other nonnative invasive plants were removed from Forest Park in Lake Forest this spring, people driving along Deerpath Road or walking on the park's lawn could see Lake Michigan. The view had been obscured for many years as nonnative vegetation grew out of...

Death Notices

First name:

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SEP. 19, 2014

Bourbon, Green lift No. 1 Stevenson over Lake Forest

It was a night full of good news for No. 1 Stevenson, not the least of which was that for the first time in three weeks, the Patriots didn't have to rally in the second half for a win.

SEP. 18, 2014

Charged in sex assault of student, teacher arrested in Bosnia

A Lake Forest man wanted on charges that he sexually assaulted a former Gavin South Middle School student has been arrested in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lake County authorities confirmed.

SEP. 11, 2014

3 charged in theft of 400 iPads from Lake Forest school

Three men were arrested in connection with the theft of about 400 iPads from the Lake Forest Academy last summer, police said Wednesday.

AUG. 28, 2014

Ex-Bears coach Lovie Smith lists Lake Forest home

Former Chicago Bears head coach Lovie Smith, now head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, has listed his 13-room brick house in Lake Forest for \$1.999 million.

SEP. 9, 2014

Driver rear-ends school bus on North Shore

No children were hurt in an accident involving a school bus in Lake Bluff this morning, officials said.

SEP. 8, 2014

Man struck, killed by Amtrak train in Lake Forest

A man was struck and killed by a southbound Amtrak train in Lake Forest last night, according to Lake Forest police.

SEP. 7, 2014

Blotter: Trespassing at college in Lake Forest

The following were taken from Lake Forest police reports.

SEP. 5, 2014

Lake Forest hires developer for condo project

A project seven years in the making for more than 100 condominiums at the former municipal services site in downtown Lake Forest has been launched onto the fast track.

SEP. 2, 2014

Suicide prevention events seek to raise awareness

Throughout Lake County and the North Shore, events have been scheduled to draw attention to the causes of and possible ways to prevent suicide.

SEP. 2, 2014

Program seeks to fight hunger in Lake County

Barb Karacic said that just a few miles from her Lake Forest home, children don't have enough to eat and don't get fresh fruits and vegetables.

SEP. 3, 2014

Blotter: Stolen shopping carts in Lake Forest

The following were taken from police reports:

SEP. 2, 2014

Special recreation group still searching for new home

The Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association — also known as NSSRA — remains in the hunt for new headquarters after a promising option in Northbrook fell through recently.

AUG. 29, 2014

Arrest warrant issued for teacher accused of child sex assault: police

An arrest warrant has been issued for a Lake Forest man who is accused of sexually assaulting a child under the age of 13, according to the Lake County Sheriff's department.

SEP. 22, 2014

Athlete of the Month is back!

Update: Thank you to everyone who nominated a #1star for our October challenge! Voting is open from Oct. 2-14; we'll be accepting nominations for our November challenge from Oct. 2-20.

AUG. 24, 2014

Better economy means more homes being razed

For some historic preservationists on the North Shore, the economic downturn in 2008 had a silver lining, bringing a lull in tear-downs and new-home construction that gave scores of vintage properties a reprieve from the wrecking ball.

AUG. 24, 2014

Blotter: 21-year-old arrested in college dorm burglary in Lake Forest

The following items were taken from Lake Forest police reports:

AUG. 22, 2014

Ground broken on new Lake Forest hospital

Four years ago, when Northwestern Memorial HealthCare merged with Lake Forest Hospital, officials promised the building at 660 N. Westmoreland Ave. would be replaced, a commitment made real today during a groundbreaking ceremony for the new \$378 million Northwestern Lake Forest Hospital...

AUG. 20, 2014

Football | Lake Forest preps for conference

There were some lean years at Lake Forest when Chuck Spagnoli took over the football program in 2003. A couple losing seasons are hardly a surprise while a new coach implements his system.

AUG. 19, 2014

Lake Forest teen's crew feeds people, prevents waste

On Varun Medhal's phone is a picture of 750 pounds of groceries — everything from pies to ground meat — packed tightly into a car.

AUG. 15, 2014

Blotter: Stolen Kindle tablet in Lake Forest

A 52-year-old Glenview man was arrested at 10:17 p.m. July 26 on Route 41 at Old Elm Road. He was charged with DUI, improper lane usage and illegal transportation of alcohol.

AUG. 13, 2014

Robin Williams' childhood in Lake Forest remembered

Growing up in Lake Forest in the early 1960s, Jeff Hodgen recalls sprawling on the floor with his close friend Robin Williams, spending hours navigating their miniature militia in elaborate, make-believe battle scenes.

AUG. 4, 2014

Teen charged with alcohol consumption in Lake Forest

The following items were taken from Lake Forest police reports.

JUL. 30, 2014

Girls soccer | Lake Forest players help out at Camp Hope

Athletes assist at recreational camp for young people with developmental disabilities

JUL. 27, 2014

Lake Forest police reports: Underage drinking, hospital altercation, stolen alcohol

The following items were taken from Lake Forest police reports:

JUL. 25, 2014

86th annual Lake County Fair rolls into town

Hundreds of kids from various day camps wearing matching shirts in vibrant colors waited with parents and camp counselors for the Banana Derby to start at the 86th annual Lake County Fair at Peterson and Midlothian roads in Grayslake.