Canine Anaplasmosis

(Anaplasma phagocytophilum)

What is *Anaplasma phagocytophilum*?

Anaplasma phagocytophilum is a bacterium that is transmitted by ticks and is the causative agent for canine anaplasmosis. These ticks include *Ixodes scapularis* and *Ixodes pacificus*, more commonly known as deer ticks, are the same organisms that carry *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the causative agent of Lyme disease. *A. phagocytophilum* can be transmitted to dogs, cats, horses and humans directly from the tick, but is not contagious between the species.

What are the signs and symptoms of *A. phagocytophilum*?

Some of the signs of *A. phagocytophilum* infection may include high fever, lethargy, anorexia, lameness, arthritis, swollen lymph nodes, vomiting, diarrhea and thrombocytopenia (low platelet count). Neurological signs, while infrequent, may result in seizures and neck pain. It is possible for these signs to overlap with those of Lyme disease and other tick-borne infections.

Many dogs with positive SNAP 4Dx *A. phagocytophilum* test results may have been previously exposed and will have no clinical signs at the time of testing.

Can *A. phagocytophilum* be passed from animals to humans?

There is currently no evidence suggesting that *A. phagocytophilum* or human granulocytic ehrlichiosis, as it is called in humans, can be passed from dogs to people. However, the disease is transmitted to both dogs and people by the same species of ticks, emphasizing the fact that a test performed by your veterinarian on your dog can be an important public health tool for people, because it can detect the risk of this disease for both people and pets.

How is Anaplasmosis treated?

A blood test known as a CBC, or complete blood count, will be performed prior to treatment to determine if there is any signs of anemia (low red blood cells) or thrombocytopenia (low platelets). If this test is normal and you pet is not displaying any other signs mentioned above, treatment is often not recommended.

Treatment for anaplasmosis involves the use of antibiotics such as tetracycline or doxycycline for a period of at least 4 weeks; response to the drugs may take one month.

How is anaplasmosis prevented?

Tick control is the most effective method of prevention. Be sure to apply Frontline or another form of tick control to your dog every month, especially during the spring and fall with tick populations peak. In addition, have you dog tested annually for the disease.