

# **The Alabama Rot Dog Disease**

## **How to spot the signs and protect your dog**

Alabama Rot Dog disease is on the rise once again in the UK, but how big a threat is it to your dog. This guide tries to explain what it is, how to spot the signs and what you can do to protect your dog from catching this deadly disease.

### **What is the Alabama Dog Rot?**

Alabama Dog Rot is a disease that causes damage to a dog's blood vessels and the kidneys. It is a mysterious disease which is hard to identify and sadly, very difficult to treat.

### **Why Alabama?**

Alabama Dog Rot was first identified amongst greyhounds in the state of Alabama in the 1980s. After this first flare up, the number of reported cases dwindled and as no clinical research was carried out, the disease was almost relegated to history. Because no one has been able to determine what causes the disease, it is now only recognisable by its collection of clinical symptoms.

### **How many dogs have been affected in the UK?**

Since the disease was first detected in 2012 in the UK the number of cases of Alabama Dog Rot in dogs has risen. The most serious outbreak was in the New Forest region of Hampshire but there have also been reported cases in several other counties, with the most recent cases reported Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire, Devon, Dorset, Cheshire, Warwickshire, Greater Manchester and Worcestershire. So far this year (2018), there have been nearly 30 confirmed cases already, following 40 cases in 2017 and 19 in 2016.

### **How is the Alabama Dog Rot spread?**

There has been some speculation that walking dogs in particular areas of the countryside may be a contributing factor, but the Forestry Commission has yet to warn of any specific sites being dangerous, reassuring dog owners by saying "Many thousands of dogs are walked in the countryside every day and it is important to remember that only a very small number of dogs have been affected."

### **How do I prevent my dog from contracting the Alabama Dog Rot?**

There are no specific steps you can take to prevent your dog from contracting the disease, but there is some evidence of seasonal fluctuation, with most cases appearing between November and June. New advice suggests keeping your dog away from very muddy areas. It is suspected the disease spreads from muddy and wooded areas – dog owners who do walk their dogs in these places are advised to wash off any mud as soon as possible, and of course, keep close control of their dogs at all times to monitor where they go.

## **What signs should I look out for in my dog?**

The first sign of Alabama Dog Rot is skin sores that have not been caused by a physical injury. These sores can present as lesions, swelling, a patch of red skin, or may be open and ulcer-like. The sores are most commonly found below the knee or elbow or occasionally on the stomach or face. Usually, this will cause localised hair loss and the dog will begin licking the wound. These lesions will be followed between two and seven days later with outward symptoms of kidney failure: reduced appetite, fatigue, and vomiting. Affected dogs will also develop signs of severe depression, loss of appetite and vomiting, quickly accompanied by acute injury to the kidneys.

## **What should I do if I think my dog has the Alabama Dog Rot?**

The best outcomes seem to be achieved by catching it early and the animal receiving high-quality veterinary care. Whilst some infected dogs do survive the treatments of skin sores and kidney failure, unfortunately, many do not – it is estimated that treatment is only successful in around 20-30% of cases.

It is important, however, not to get overly worried by this as the percentage of dogs in the UK who have contracted this disease is truly minuscule. Though, what is vital, is that you understand the problem and know what to look out for, should your dog come into contact with it, as time plays a large part in successfully treating the disease.

## **What is the source of the Alabama Dog Rot?**

The source of the disease is unknown, with the Environment Agency ruling out any chemical contamination in water supplies. Experts believe the disease is “very similar” to the Alabama Rot, thought to be related to a toxin produced by E. Coli bacteria, however, no evidence of this has been found after no signs were shown on the infected dogs.