

PROTECT YOUR DOG FROM FISH DISEASE

Commonly known as salmon poisoning, fish disease is a potentially fatal condition seen in dogs who have ingested certain types of raw fish found in the Pacific Northwest from San Francisco to the coast of Alaska; it is most prevalent from northern California to the Puget Sound. It is also seen inland along the rivers of fish migration.

Salmon, trout, and other fish such as the lamprey, sculpin, redbreast shiner, shad, sturgeon, candlefish and the large-scale sucker who spend their lives in coastal streams and rivers in the Pacific Northwest can be infected with a tiny snail called *Nanophyetus Salmincola*, which in turn, may be infected with a bacterium called *Neorickettsia*. It is this bacterium that causes the disease. If not treated, fish disease is usually fatal within two weeks after exposure.

Symptoms to Watch For:

The symptoms of fish disease are similar to other gastrointestinal diseases such as canine parvovirus. If infected, your dog would likely show some or all of the following symptoms about 6 to 10 days after ingesting fish which were carrying the bacteria:

- Listlessness or weakness
- Lack of appetite
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Dehydration

Diagnosis & Treatment:

If you know your dog has ingested raw fish and it exhibits any of the symptoms listed above, notify your veterinarian immediately. If identified in time, fish disease is treatable. A helpful part of the diagnosis is telling your veterinarian that your dog ate raw fish. If your dog roams, raids trash cans, or you are unsure of what it has eaten for any reason, be sure to mention this to your veterinarian, especially if your dog is exhibiting any of the above symptoms.

The disease is diagnosed with analysis of a fecal sample to detect the parasite's eggs or by detecting the bacteria through a needle sample from a swollen lymph node. Treatment involves administration of an antibiotic to kill the bacteria and a dewormer to kill the parasite. If a dog is vomiting at the time of evaluation, it may need to be hospitalized for IV fluid administration. Many dogs

respond to treatment quickly, showing improvement in just a few days. Once recovered, many dogs have a permanent immunity to the disease.

Prevention:

Control what your dog eats while on fishing trips.
Leash your dog at the beach or river so that you can monitor its activities.
Wrap garbage, especially fish entrails, and dispose in well-secured cans.
Don't feed raw fish to your dog. Cook the fish thoroughly or deep-freeze the fish for a minimum of 2 weeks to destroy the parasite before feeding it to your dog.