



Family VetCare of Mesa 480-892-7958
Family VetCare of Phoenix 480-759-9494
Family VetCare of Chandler 480-940-9494
www.familyvetcare.com

Valley Fever

What is Valley Fever (Coccidioidomycosis)

This disease is a fungal infection that generally begins in the lungs but may rapidly spread to other organs such as spleen, liver, kidney, bone and joints, brain and skin. The fungal spores, which cause Valley Fever, are present in the soil of the southwestern United States and enter the body by inhalation along with dust particles. The disease is not contagious (except for draining skin lesions) and infection occurs in a few days to several weeks following exposure. Dogs and humans are susceptible to this disease – Boxers and Doberman Pinschers are especially prone to the disseminated form.

What are the symptoms of Valley Fever?

The “classical” symptoms of Valley Fever consist of intermittent fever, coughing, lethargy and poor appetite. If the disease has become disseminated (spread to organs other than the lungs), then symptoms are associated with the organs involved. These may include intermittent diarrhea, weight loss, limping and/or enlarged joints, shortness of breath, and difficulty swallowing. Less frequently, meningitis or involvement of the eyes may occur.

How is Valley Fever diagnosed?

The most reliable means of diagnosis is blood tests. However, in early cases of the disease or in some individuals with a less than adequate immune system, the blood tests may be negative when in fact the infection is actually present. A thorough physical examination and radiographs of the chest or affected bones also help in diagnosis of the disease. Sometimes additional blood testing is necessary as the disease can affect many organs and can mimic other diseases.

Can Valley Fever be treated?

Your Veterinarian may prescribe Fluconazole (an anti-fungal medication), as the primary treatment for Valley Fever. Initially, each patient is treated for three months then a follow-up blood test is performed to evaluate the effectiveness of the medication and the need for any change in dosage. This 3-month cycle is repeated until the infection is eradicated. It is important that the infection be completely eradicated before discontinuing Fluconazole. Even when the dog no longer shows obvious symptoms of the disease, the infection can recur.

What is the prognosis for my pet?

In general, the prognosis is good for most patients. The earlier the disease is identified and treated, the better the outlook. If Valley Fever has become disseminated and spread to other organs or bones, the treatment is much more lengthy and the prognosis is more uncertain.

“Complete Care From Head To Tail”