

## **Biggles flies again.....**

It was a hot sunny day when Biggles was carried into my consulting room looking very 'hangdog'. His owners explained he had been under the weather for a few days but had got a lot worse overnight and this morning he was struggling to get up. They also had noticed that his urine was an unusual red colour. I examined Biggles, who normally was a lively fellow, but today was very cooperative as he didn't have the energy to struggle. His gums were a very pale colour and his temperature was high.

Now those of you who have been involved with cattle may have seen cases of 'redwater' in cows. They pass large quantities of very red urine which is quite dramatic to see and is caused by an infection spread by ticks. However this disease does not normally occur in dogs. However on closer questioning of Biggles owner it turned out they had fairly recently been to southern France on holiday. Biggles does not like being separated from them so had gone along as well.

It is easy enough to take your dog abroad with you nowadays. As long as you have it microchipped first, then vaccinated against rabies, it can be issued with a passport 3 weeks later. You can then visit most European countries, as well as other approved ones, as long as you visit a Veterinary Surgeon just before you return. They need to worm your dog and stamp its' passport for you to be allowed to bring it back into the country.

However the requirement to have your dog treated against ticks before its return was done away with several years ago as a result of the need for 'European harmonisation', which basically means having the same requirements for moving between differing countries even if logically they should be different.

Unfortunately for Biggles, while in the south of France, he was bitten by a strain of tick that we do not have in this country. This carried a disease, 'Babesiosis canis' that we do not have and Biggles would have had no immunity against. Hence he contracted a very nasty case of it, which without prompt treatment he probably would have died of. He had to have repeated injections of the drug made to treat cattle with 'redwater' before he began to show any improvement. Even now, many months later, he is at risk of reoccurrences of the illness. Unfortunately these ticks are now being brought back on dogs to this country and are now starting to colonise here and occurrences of these diseases are already being seen in dogs that have not left the UK.

Babesiosis is not the only exotic disease our pets are in danger of catching if they go abroad. There are several other tickbourne diseases, as well as one spread by sand flies, and others. It is therefore very important you visit your veterinary Surgeon before you travel to get your dog properly protected against ticks. You might also want to consider vaccination against Leishmaniasis if you are going to Southern Europe. And with the ever increasing Tick population in the UK it is sensible to use effective products even in this country that kill ticks all year around but especially in the spring and autumn. So don't let your dog end up like Biggles; he might be up and running again but not all are so lucky. Talk to your Veterinary Surgeon now.

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