

Valley Fever

Lisa S. Newman, N.D., Ph.D. (2007)

What is Valley Fever?

Valley Fever is carried by dust particles, mainly inhaled but can also be absorbed through the skin on rare occasions from long term exposure to spore infested dirt. It is impossible to avoid the assimilation of the spore ... but not impossible to support the body against it!

Should We Accept “Nizoral or Death” as the Only Answer?

Lisa S. Newman, N.D., Ph.D.

A version of the article below was published in Natural Pet magazine's 1995 Spring Issue and first appeared as part of documented research in the fall of 1987.

This highly infectious disease of the Southwestern United States and similar arid regions of Mexico and South America is seen by some veterinarians as a canine plague, striking down all types of dogs regardless of breed, age or history.

“Successful” allopathic medical treatment is based upon the antifungal drug Nizoral[†] and symptom treatments (bute / aspirin for pain, antibiotics for infections, steroids for inflammation, bismuth for upset digestive tracts and corn syrup to entice eating) while they struggle through years of relapses, often to face more serious bouts and secondary symptoms such as adrenal malfunction, as the years go by. Alternative therapies including nutritional, glandular, homeopathic and herbal support have proven very effective in stimulating the body's own defenses, while cleansing away the fungal infestation and continuing to strengthening the body, rather than burdening it further with chemicals.

Today's frustration and fear due to this small fungal spore, resulting in coccidioidomycosis -- more commonly known as Valley Fever, is justified in allopathic circles but ... I have not found this to be true. From a holistic point of view, treatment supports the body in healing itself, reducing the possibility of relapse and definitely eliminates secondary symptoms most commonly caused by drug therapy.

Most importantly, prevention is possible when a naturopathic approach to dog rearing is followed. I would like to briefly discuss this before we go into detail on alternative treatments, because most practitioners, even holistic veterinarians, still seem to believe that there is no definitive “cure”, let alone possible prevention, but I have found in hundreds of dogs I have documented that a toxic emotional and physical environment ALWAYS precedes the onset of symptoms and I have yet to see one dog truly naturally-reared never become symptomatic, even if they tested positive for a fungal count. Eight years ago, I had 20 dogs who were given clean bills of health by their veterinarians and had no symptoms, randomly tested and I was not surprised by the results; 16 out of the 20 dogs tested positive, with titers ranging anywhere from 1:4 to 1:32.

Therefore, I do feel that most animals living in the southwest are infected to some degree, but it is the state of the immune system which determines whether or not an animal becomes symptomatic. Prevention then must be recognized as a state where the body is non-symptomatic, regardless of the titer count, and many dogs live out their lives infected but not symptomatic.

Once the body is burdened through vaccinations, additives and such in the diet, other chronic health problems such as allergies, medications (especially steroids, which have been known to trigger many a relapse), toxic sprays and dips or emotionally stressful periods such as during the death of a family member, human or animal, or divorce, the immune system weakens and cannot “hold off” fungal development.

As it spreads, immune-supportive organs and glands, such as the adrenals, begin to malfunction. With traditional allopathic care, especially Nizoral[†], the body has a struggle with the side-effects of the treatment as well as the disease itself! It is not uncommon for a client to call me, after years of going on and off medication only to find it less effective as time goes on but worse, it has begun to break down vital tissue such as that in the liver and they are panicked because the vet now wants to stop the medication before it causes more damage and have given the dog a death sentence because they think that is all that can be done!

However, in most of the worst cases, even when drug intervention is needed, a naturopathic approach has reversed not only the symptoms, but has often reversed the ill side-effects of previous medical treatments. First, the fungus can be destroyed by various natural remedies. These are listed in the order that I have found to be the most effective: ImmunoStim'R™, Yeast & Fungal D'Tox™, Garlic Daily Aid™ (between 1,000mg to 6,000mg a day), grapefruit seed extract such as Nutribiotic, and homeopathic products such as Azmira[®]'s D'Toxifier™.

In only a few cases did only one ingredient do the trick, often it was a combination of these or at least a rotation such as between the garlic and herbs.

Often, a general cleansing program or short fast should first be pursued to prime the body for healing, as toxic waste builds up from past diets and medications, etc. will prohibit proper assimilation and interfere with the healing process. Azmira[®] D'Toxifier™ is a homeopathic primer which can help start this process. This alone can begin a settling of the strengthening of the body, and many are surprised by the response especially in animals that were already off their foods or having vomiting or diarrhea symptoms.

Diet should then be considered, as a fundamental element to any successful healing program, and the more whole, natural foods you can feed the better. Include plenty of fresh, raw sprouts and wheatgrass. Beware of “natural” commercial diets...be sure that they are animal fat-free (fats are very difficult to digest and stress the body more than support it, as well as contain “contamination” levels of preservatives such as ethoxyquin which is used to preserve the fat prior to manufacturing), contain range-fed meats (to avoid hormones, steroid and antibiotic residue) and pesticide-free grains.

A high potency general vitamin & mineral supplement such as Mega Pet Daily™, to supply vital nutrients for cellular, tissue and immune system support, in an easy to assimilate form, is necessary no matter how complete your home cooked or commercial diet may be. Super C 2000™ should also be included in however high a level can be tolerated (1,500mg to 6,000mg per day, divided into several small doses).

Other supplements should be used as needed, depending on the individual needs of the dog. If the dog is of a very nervous nature, fearful or hyper, then Azmira[®]'s Flower Power remedies should be considered, as

emotional stress directly affects the immune system and can inhibit the benefits of other ingredients. B-Complex 50™ should be added for good potent daily doses of the all important B vitamins, especially when the dog has difficulty relaxing or sleeping soundly (necessary for reserving and replenishing strength for healing).

WARNING: Do not use yeast in excess, what is available in most diets is sufficient. Excessive yeast will not be utilized and becomes toxic to the liver.

If the cocci has settled in the bone and joints, with inflammation, pain and lameness, then a natural anti-inflammatory such as our Yucca Intensive™ (proven as effective as steroids and bute without the side-effects) and Vita E 200™ (200 i.u.'s per day) should be added. This is also true with other tissue inflammation such as in the skin, liver, brain or lungs. When the lungs are heavily involved, then our lung toners should be considered. We have various homeopathic combinations for different coughs or fluid buildup, and herbal extracts to repair and maintain lung tissue.

Secondary fevers and infections such as staph or strep should be targeted with garlic, goldenseal, or citricidal, all proven natural antibiotics that are effective without compromising the body further as drug antibiotics have been known to do.

When the dog is so badly off that drugs seem to be the only way, then by all means, be sure to support the body from negative side-effects. Since antibiotics (anti-life) destroy the friendly, necessary bacteria as well, you must replenish this with acidophilus. Limit the time of drug treatment as soon as you possibly can, within 4 days, may longer and the body starts to suffer from the antibiotics. The same should be considered of Nizoral[†], with drug therapy only considered as a final solution, used less than six weeks, it can give the body a head start if the titer is extremely high (1:100+). Seriously, Nizoral[†] and steroids should be used very sparingly or not at all, if possible!

Skin problems can be supported through topical applications of soothing and healing extracts as in our Rejuva Spray™.

Actual fever can also be present and responds well to homeopathic Ferrum Phosphate 6X. Glandulars should also be considered as supportive therapy, especially the adrenals which deplete quickly when the body is stressed or feverish. Liver and pancreatic glandulars can be especially beneficial when there is loss of appetite and / or irritable bowel syndrome is included in the secondary symptoms. In the very least a multiple glandular, such as Biotics' Neonatal MultiGlandular, should be included in your program to cover general needs. Above all, please remember that it takes nature a bit more time to overcome the disease than it may seem with drug therapy.

Many people get frustrated with the time involved (generally 3 to 6 months to stabilize the situation, up to a year to complete re-establishment of the immune system), not realizing that although they may have suppressed a symptom with drugs today, it generally returns with a vengeance and is less responsive to the drugs each time. When following a natural course, symptoms may seem to "linger" longer, but the over-all condition of the dog gradually improves and this must be acknowledged, to not give up hope to soon.

Also, a lot of emphasis is placed on the titer count, but don't be discouraged by the titer count around 1:4. The count will often stay in that range, even a bit higher, for years while the dog remains not only symptom-free, but healthy. Even when there is a "relapse", most commonly what happens is a curative response

where the body temporarily seems to weaken and then rebound, and in fact is moving through another healing stage (possibly throwing off more stored toxins), the dog will be much stronger after that, rather than weakened.

Once the body has cleansed and is strengthening, symptoms will seem to simply fade away, but we know the truth: **THE WHOLE BODY IS RESPONDING AND WILL ACTUALLY HEAL ITSELF, RATHER THAN FOOL ITSELF WITH SYMPTOM SUPPRESSION!**

Unfortunately, many people will work very hard and successfully for years, only to lose their dog “suddenly” to a medication or vaccination reaction. A case in point was when a client who had successfully maintained the health of her dog for three years following a near death experience from Nizoral[†] toxicity (after being on it for two years). She then went to her vet for a routine check up and current rabies vaccination.

The vet (after mentioning that the dog was in the best health he had ever seen him in) noticed a very small, recent hot spot from an insect bite and before the owner knew anything, he had given her dog an injection of steroids on top of the vaccination. Within 6 weeks, all the old Valley Fever symptoms returned with a vengeance!

When she returned to her vet as her dog quickly deteriorated, he looked her straight in the eye and said, “well it’s not uncommon ... we know that steroids can trigger a relapse, just put him back on the Nizoral[†] and it should do the trick.” She panicked and followed his instructions all the way, only to have her dog die within two months after “suddenly” going into kidney failure. Imagine how shocked I was when she finally broke down and told me this story (very depressed that she had been so foolish not to have called me first and use our Rejuva Spray™ or at least lemon juice, aloe or calendula to heal the skin rather than the steroid and thus avoid the reaction).

This is not uncommon, and it is not the vet’s fault -- he was doing exactly what he had been trained to do: treat that symptom with medication. It was the owner’s responsibility to demand to know exactly what the vet intended to do and then consent to allowing him to do so! To know her dog’s history and how he had responded to medication in the past and how much better he had done on holistic support and to have shared this information with the veterinarian so they could evaluate their choices together. Also, to know in advance whether this particular doctor was “open” to this information to begin with, or to have found one who would support her in doing what was working, rather than what was expected.

Ultimately, it was the owner’s responsibility to pay attention to what their dog might be going through and to utilize the proper medical and / or natural support as needed, based upon all the available information. Through naturopathic therapies, Valley Fever can be eliminated and the body strengthened, or at the very least maintained symptom-free and healthy. With all the information we now have about the negative side-effects of medications and symptom suppression, and the frustration of relapses, natural ingredients that stimulate the immune system and support the body in healing are rapidly proving to be far superior and safer route to take.

[†] Nizoral is a member of the chemical family CONAZOLES, which includes similar and commonly prescribed drugs like Sporanox and Diflucan.

Q & A about Valley Fever

Q: After we stopped medication, the Valley Fever symptoms returned within nine months. Now nothing we try will work, the titer keeps rising and the medications seem to be making Buster sicker. Why aren't they working as well this time around? Can we do anything else?

A: Symptom suppression through medication does not address rebuilding the immune system. Each time the symptoms come back, the body weakens and cannot rebound as well. Dr. Newman's Holistic Animal Care Lifestyle[®] stimulates the body to not only strengthen, but to remain well.

FYI

Many dogs who have suffered from Valley Fever, especially relapses, have had one thing in common ... emotional stress, particularly grief and / or abandonment issues.

Frequently, we have found out that these dogs suffered the loss of a close human or animal companion within six months of the onset of the symptoms. Emotional stability is as important as nutritional stability when it comes to supporting a strong immune system! "Clear" negative emotions through proven homeopathic remedies such as Azmira[®]'s Flower Power remedies!

Supplementation is the Key to Boosting Health

When the body has been badly compromised by disease, it quickly depletes vital nutrients and energies, necessary for healing.

These nutrients should be replaced by proper supplementation so that the body can fuel its energies. Without it, the body continues to deplete its reserves until there is nothing left with which to fight the disease. Many things during illness also deplete the body, such as medications and improper digestion of food. Steroids, antibiotic and especially Nizoral are very hard on the body and produce several side-effects (which are often treated with more medications). One common side-effect to these, as well as the Valley Fever itself, is a lack of appetite and poor digestion. This leads to poor assimilation and lack of proper dietary intake.

The result is a more dramatic drop in the levels of vital nutrients, which perpetuates the loss of appetite, general weakness and lack of energy associated with the disease. Proper supplementation can reverse this.

Products to Consider:

Mega Pet Daily™

Provides vital nutrients for optimum health and healing.

ImmunoStim'R™

Is a very effective immune system stimulator.

Yucca Intensive™

Can provide relief for many inflammatory and painful conditions, including tissue, bone, and joint problems.

Garlic Daily Aid™

Has natural antibiotic, antifungal, and antiparasitic properties which benefit the whole body and digestion.

Flower Essence Remedies

Can provide relief for stress and emotional issues that are known to trigger immune suppression.

D'toxifier™

Helps clear the body of toxins.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Newman holds a Doctor of Naturopathy and a Doctor of Philosophy (in Holistic Nutrition) and has been a world renowned pioneer in the field of natural pet care. The author of nine books, including her latest, 'Three Simple Steps to Healthy Pets: The Holistic Animal Care LifeStyle®', Dr. Newman is also the formulator of Azmira Holistic Animal Care® products and diets.



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