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Salmon Poisoning Disease

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A pitbull dog living in the Antelope Valley was reported to have been infected with Salmon Poisoning Disease in late February this year. The dog's owner had caught fish at a local lake and cleaned out the fish at home. The dog licked the ground where fish intestines had fallen. The dog became very ill over a week later, with a fever of 105 degrees Fahrenheit, diarrhea, a painful abdomen, and swollen lymph nodes. The dog was hospitalized and is now recovering.

Four dogs were reported to have been infected with Salmon Poisoning Disease in 2006. One dog lived in Santa Monica and three in the Antelope Valley. The dog in Santa Monica became ill after eating a fish head found in the trash. The fish had been caught in a lake in Orange County. The three dogs in Antelope Valley all became ill after consuming fish in a local lake. Three of the four dogs recovered, while one died.

What is Salmon Poisoning Disease?

Salmon Poisoning Disease is caused by a bacteria (*Neorickettsia*) that lives inside a parasite (*Nanophyetus*) that can infect trout and salmon. Dogs can catch the illness when they eat raw or undercooked trout or salmon that is infected with the disease. Dogs become very ill from the bacteria, but not from the parasite. Symptoms can include fever, vomiting, diarrhea, bloody diarrhea, severe lethargy, and physical collapse and possible death. The disease causes no harm to the fish itself.

Do people get Salmon Poisoning Disease?

Humans that eat raw fish or who do not practice good sanitation in preparing fish can become infected by the parasite (but not the bacteria), and experience intestinal illness, usually mild.

Which fish can cause the disease?

Salmon Poisoning Disease is native to Northern California, but does not occur naturally in Southern California. However, fish (trout, salmon) from Northern California are commonly "planted" in Southern California lakes for sport fishing. Local fishermen and veterinarians in Southern California need to be aware of that local lakes may be stocked with fish containing this parasite and bacteria.

What should I do?

- NEVER ALLOW DOGS TO EAT ANY RAW FISH OR FISH PRODUCTS.
- Fisherman should always use excellent sanitation when cleaning.
- If your dog has eaten raw fish caught from a local lake and becomes ill, mention the fish to your veterinarian.

