

Investigation in Lyme Borreliosis and other Vector-Borne Diseases in People and Dogs in Australia

Hello

I would like to invite you to join a study I am conducting into several vector-borne diseases – **Lyme Borreliosis, Bartonellosis, Babesiosis and Rickettsiosis**.

As you may know, Lyme disease is an infection of humans and dogs that is caused by Borrelia bacteria that are usually transmitted to humans via the bite of an infected tick. In regions of the world where Lyme disease is endemic and well recognised, people's dogs are also often infected by the same organism. This is because dogs, being 'closer to the ground' and having ready access to the undergrowth, are even more likely than their owners to be exposed to the vector ticks. Dogs are often regarded in these regions as "sentinels" of infection; in other words the dogs can act as an early warning of potential infection in humans in the area.

Currently it is not clear whether humans are able to contract Lyme disease locally, here in Australia. Our research aims to help answer this important question. We are sampling dogs living in the **Northern Beaches and Ku-Ring-Gai areas of Sydney (postcodes 2101-2108 & 2084)** to test whether any are positive for Lyme infection (and other organisms).

In order for this research project to be fully informative I need your consent to obtain information about your dog(s) and I also seek your permission to take a blood sample from your dog(s). This study has been approved by the Animal Research Ethics Committee at Murdoch University.

If you wish to participate in the study **and you reside at one of these postcodes** I suggest that we proceed as follows:

1. Call the **Mona Vale Veterinary Hospital** to arrange to take your dog there for sampling. The vets there are kindly assisting with this research. Their phone number is: **9999 2269**
2. You read all the information provided with this letter, **sign the consent form and tell the nurse/vet that it is OK for them to collect the blood sample for me.**
3. **Please would you also complete the short questionnaire about your dog? This information is vital for the study.**

The initial results of the blood test on your dog(s) will be available immediately. We will be using a test kit known as the Idexx Snap 4Dx. This provides information on whether your dog has been exposed to three bacterial organisms (Borrelia, Ehrlichia and Anaplasma) and whether he/she has heartworm. So this is a free heartworm test as well! You will be notified if there is any positive result.

I am happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about this study. All my contact details are provided below.

Sincerely

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This study has been approved by the Murdoch University Animal Ethics Committee (Approval R2385/10). If you have any reservation or complaint about the ethical conduct of this research, and wish to talk with an independent person, you may contact Murdoch University's Research Ethics Office (Tel. 08 9360 6677 or e-mail ethics@murdoch.edu.au). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.