

Announcer 0:12

If you want a wildly healthy, naturally disease-resistant pet, who turns heads and starts conversations with awestruck onlookers, you're right where you belong. This is the Vital Animal Podcast with your host, homeopathic veterinarian, Dr. Will Falconer.

Will Falconer, DVM 0:36

Welcome, everyone. This is Dr. Will Falconer. I'm back with the Vital Animal Podcast and we are talking about Lyme disease today. A very interesting disease. And I've asked a friend who's a homeopathic colleague to rejoin me. Welcome to Dr. Todd Cooney.

Todd Cooney, DVM 0:56

Thanks, Will, thanks very much. Nice to be here.

Will Falconer, DVM 0:58

Glad to have you, Todd.

Will Falconer, DVM 1:01

So, we've got this disease called Lyme that I see a lot of hand-wringing about and I see a lot of conventional veterinarians overprescribing for. I see animals that have a supposed diagnosis of Lyme, when really all they've got is a Lyme titer, and they're getting blasted with antibiotics for a month. So, I wanted to get you on just to get your thoughts as a homeopathic vet on what we can say about Lyme, as a disease, maybe, first. It sounds like a bit of an oddball.

Todd Cooney, DVM 1:37

Yeah, I think it's right. I think it is a bit of an oddball. Well, first of all, you know, it wasn't around until more recently, just like the human Lyme.

Will Falconer, DVM 1:47

Yeah.

Todd Cooney, DVM 1:48

Which may go back a little farther. But I think Lyme disease in dogs has really spun off of the human field. And they've modeled everything after the human model, you know, as far as diagnosis and treatment.

Will Falconer, DVM 2:01

Uh-huh.

Todd Cooney, DVM 2:01

The problem is that dogs don't seem to really get sick with Lyme disease. It seems to be a hard—to me, it's a hard sell. I remember back in the homeopathy course, Dr. Pitcairn said he didn't think it was a real disease of dogs. And several of us perked up and said, "Whoa, wait a minute," you know.

Will Falconer, DVM 2:19

Yeah.

Todd Cooney, DVM 2:20

How can you say that?

Will Falconer, DVM 2:21

We're hearing about it. Yeah.

Todd Cooney, DVM 2:23

Yeah, there's a vaccine for it, there's a test for it. How can you say it's not a real disease? But the more I looked at it, the more I thought about it, I think he's correct.

Will Falconer, DVM 2:31

And yet people seem to have a very different experience. I mean, I've only known, kind of anecdotally, a person or two that's had Lyme disease. And boy, they're down for years of sickness oftentimes, right?

Todd Cooney, DVM 2:42

Oh, yeah. Yeah, with people, yeah, it's definitely a bad thing in humans. I'm not arguing about that. But it doesn't seem to follow this pattern in dogs. In some of the things I read, when I was preparing an article for Dogs Naturally, they've never been able to infect dogs in the lab and cause disease artificially, which is strange. You know, with most things, they can do that.

Will Falconer, DVM 3:06

Right.

Todd Cooney, DVM 3:07

The only success they had was in very young puppies, and it was a very transient type of joint disease that the puppies got over on their own in a short time. So, to me that doesn't really sound like a serious disease. And it didn't go on to advance and turn into kidney or heart disease like it can in people, neurological disease. So, it doesn't seem to follow the same pattern, first of all.

Will Falconer, DVM 3:30

Interesting. Yeah. And so, in the past, I've said, well, okay, we've got a titer in your dog, how's your dog feeling? Is that a question you ask as well?

Todd Cooney, DVM 3:43

Oh, I do. It's one of the first things I ask. They tell me, they're in a panic, you know, the first thing, "My dog has Lyme disease." I go, "Whoa, wait a minute. So, your dog tested positive?" "Yeah." "What are the symptoms?" "Well, he doesn't have symptoms, he acts fine. He acts like there's nothing wrong." And I say, "Well, okay, let's start there."

Will Falconer, DVM 4:02

Yeah, yeah, that's important. Right?

Todd Cooney, DVM 4:04

Let's back up the excitement a little bit.

Will Falconer, DVM 4:08

Yeah.

Todd Cooney, DVM 4:09

Because I think the conventional side, they do approach it with a fear-based approach, just like they do a lot of other things, you know, so I think the vets themselves are afraid of it, which leads to transferring that fear to the clients. Afraid of the seriousness of the disease, because they know what it does in people, and afraid that maybe they won't be able to treat it.

Will Falconer, DVM 4:31

Aha.

Todd Cooney, DVM 4:32

I'm sure there are a lot of vets that think they're successfully treating Lyme disease because they have a dog with positive tests and they treat them and then the dog continues to do well with no symptoms. So, they assume they've fixed it.

Will Falconer, DVM 4:46

And does the titer drop after a month worth of antibiotics? Have you ever known that?

Todd Cooney, DVM 4:51

No, I don't think so. I've never really seen many dogs go back to being titer negative.

Will Falconer, DVM 4:58

Uh-huh.

Todd Cooney, DVM 4:58

Most dogs seem to retain that titer for a long time, if not for their lives. I haven't really followed it that much. It'd be interesting to see if any work's been done on that, you know, how long do they keep the titer?

Will Falconer, DVM 5:10

So, let's talk about titers for a minute. Because I want people who are maybe new to the idea to know A, what a titer is and B, how it can be interpreted. Would you give us a brief thumbnail? What's a titer?

Todd Cooney, DVM 5:24

Yeah, well, a titer really is a measure of antibodies in the blood, antibodies to certain disease agents, virus or bacteria. And it's a measurement of how, well, first of all, measurement of whether there's been exposure or not. You either have a positive or a negative titer, and then some labs can quantify the titer too and give it a number value. And they usually do it by diluting the serum in half in serial dilution. So, they'll say it's a 1-to-8 or a 1-to-16 or a 1-to-32. And the more diluted is, the higher the titer supposedly is, I think that's how it works.

Will Falconer, DVM 6:03

Right.

Todd Cooney, DVM 6:04

That means the more potent their antibodies against that. So, a Lyme titer, antibody titer, is just, I think, a yes or no. They can do a quantitative titer. One of the things from the ACVIM, which we're going to get into in a little bit, one of the things they mentioned was that there's not an accurate quantitative titer. And how did they say it?

Will Falconer, DVM 6:31

First, who's the ACVIM?

Todd Cooney, DVM 6:34

Yeah, sorry. So, the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine. So, people that go to the doctor are familiar with the term internist, they'll go to an internist, someone who specializes on internal workings.

Will Falconer, DVM 6:46

Right.

Todd Cooney, DVM 6:47

So, the College of Veterinary Internal Medicine are specialists, as a group, like cardiologists, gastroenterologists, kidney specialists, people that specialize on internal medicine. So, they have a...

Will Falconer, DVM 6:59

They've taken extra training.

Todd Cooney, DVM 7:00

Yeah, they take extra training. Yeah, they do internships, residencies. So, they've really got like three to five extra years of training on top of vet school, usually. So, they're sharp people, and they're hard-working people. And I think well-meaning. But when I was digging deeper into Lyme disease, and just looking at conventional ideas about it, I found these papers that they had written. They wrote the first one back in, I think it was 2006. Yeah, they wrote guidelines. And they do this on other things, too. They'll do guidelines on different topics, but they did a guideline on Lyme disease in 2006. And then they updated this in 2018. So, they didn't really change a lot in 2018. But one conclusion I had after I read this is that I don't think a lot of the veterinary community has really read this, or knows that it exists. I wasn't aware of it, really. But they have a lot of interesting stats in this. A big one is that, unlike exposed humans, 95% of exposed dogs remain asymptomatic, which means they don't get sick. They're not sick.

Will Falconer, DVM 8:05

Uh-huh.

Todd Cooney, DVM 8:06

So, just like a lot of people that get exposed to COVID, although we don't want to go into that. So, a dog is exposed, gets an antibody, never has any symptoms.

Will Falconer, DVM 8:17

Aha, aha.

Todd Cooney, DVM 8:18

So...

Will Falconer, DVM 8:19

Therefore, isn't sick.

Todd Cooney, DVM 8:21

Therefore, is not sick. Yeah, by definition. I mean, they've mounted a response to a pathogen, but they aren't sick. They don't have Lyme disease, I mean, by definition. So...

Will Falconer, DVM 8:34

Right, right.

Todd Cooney, DVM 8:35

Yeah.

Will Falconer, DVM 8:35

So, I think those animals with titers for Lyme, that are walking around, eating and drinking and playing and doing all their normal life, probably ought to be applauded.

Todd Cooney, DVM 8:47

Yeah. I think so.

Will Falconer, DVM 8:48

They've done a great job of responding to an illness and prevented it.

Todd Cooney, DVM 8:53

Exactly. Yeah, exactly. And that's what I tell people too, you could look at this as saying that your dog has immunity. They have immunity.

Will Falconer, DVM 9:02

Yep.

Todd Cooney, DVM 9:03

Similar to the way they look at vaccine titers, although that's debatable, too. But that's a little different thing, I think, too, because you've got other factors of immunity with viruses that don't really apply to this. But the other thing that impressed me was that, and Richard Pitcairn had touched on this and I asked him if he knew of any studies and he said no, he thought he read it a long time ago in Kirk's Current Vet Therapy, he thought, maybe an older edition, which I couldn't find that anywhere. But I did find that in the ACVIM paper that researchers have never been able to cause Lyme disease in experiments by putting infected ticks on dogs. And they've tried, I mean, they've really tried. Not just putting ticks on the dogs, but injecting the actual organism into the dog. So, putting it in injectable form and just giving them a shot of Lyme disease. The closest thing they got to was just a transient arthritis in the leg closest to the tick bite in 6- to 12-week-old puppies. But when they tried this in adult dogs, they couldn't produce the same symptoms. And all these puppies had self-limiting symptoms, which means they got better on their own. They didn't require treatment. So, to me, that's pretty telling.

Will Falconer, DVM 10:06

Yeah. So, they tried to infect them, and they couldn't.

Todd Cooney, DVM 10:30

They tried. Yeah, they did try. And Dr. Pitcairn said he thought he remembered something about, the only way they could do it is if they stressed the dogs with steroid treatment. And I couldn't really find much about that. I tried but I didn't really find any documentation. But that makes sense, that if you stressed them with steroids, because... The other thing they said is that the more serious complications of Lyme disease, like kidney, heart, neurologic, and skin disease, things that are common in people, have not been reproduced with dogs at all. So, there are hypothetical possibilities. They could happen in theory, but they haven't happened. So...

Will Falconer, DVM 11:10

So, the dogs, you're saying, don't get that set of symptoms that the people do.

Todd Cooney, DVM 11:14

Yeah.

Will Falconer, DVM 11:15

That's according to these experts.

Todd Cooney, DVM 11:16

Yeah, they seem to have a little more natural immunity to it than people do, I guess you could say. And we know that that's true with other diseases and other species, you know, some species seem to be immune to certain diseases, compared to people. So...

Will Falconer, DVM 11:31

Sure, sure. So, the ACVIM, the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine, then, what do they say about a titer? And what do they say about vaccination?

Todd Cooney, DVM 11:44

Well, it's interesting. As far as titers, one of the stats they had is that in some areas where Lyme disease is endemic, you know, where it's very common, 70 to 90% of all the dogs tested are positive for Lyme. Yet, most are healthy with no symptoms. So, that would be, you know, like the East Coast, New England, those areas, and pockets of the Midwest, too.

Will Falconer, DVM 12:06

Yep.

Todd Cooney, DVM 12:06

It doesn't seem to be too bad where I am, but... And they said that there's no individual test result that can document illness from Lyme infection. So, that's interesting. And then, they do go into some of the recommendations, and I mentioned those in the article I wrote earlier, but doxycycline is the main one that people are familiar with. And the only reason I mentioned it is because it's mentioned in ACVIM. I'm not a big fan of it. If we have a dog that is antibody positive, we usually don't do doxycycline. We might treat with homeopathy based on any symptoms that are present, but... And they do state too that positive test, so

the positive antibody test, only indicates exposure to the organism, which is called Borrelia. Or, they call it BB, Borrelia burgdorferi. So, instead of saying that, they just say BB. And so, it indicates just exposure to that, not really clinical disease.

Will Falconer, DVM 13:07

Uh-huh.

Todd Cooney, DVM 12:30

And they state that titer strength doesn't relate to the presence or absence of disease. Because some people say, "Oh, it's a strong positive, you know, he must really have it bad, so strong positive." But you can't, you know, you can't really say that. You just say, "It's yes or no."

Will Falconer, DVM 13:16

There's no symptoms. Yeah, yeah.

Todd Cooney, DVM 13:25

It's yes or no. So, in summary, when they sum things up toward the end of the paper, they argued against routine screening of healthy dogs for the following reasons, and this is what really shocked me, because I didn't realize that they had come out, you know, a formal position against routine screening of healthy dogs, which is what's happening all over the country. And...

Will Falconer, DVM 13:45

Yeah, yeah.

Todd Cooney, DVM 13:47

You've got the four-way heartworm test, the test for Lyme and Anaplasma and Ehrlichia, heartworm. And many dogs get that every year at their annual physical, so if they're unlucky enough to show up with a Lyme positive, guess what they're gonna probably recommend? So...

Will Falconer, DVM 14:05

Uh-huh.

Todd Cooney, DVM 14:05

But the reason they gave against routine testing, one is that it results in overdiagnosis and overtreatment, based on a test that doesn't really diagnose Lyme disease, nor predict its occurrence, so... And also, the fact that most positive dogs never become ill with Lyme disease and don't need treatment. So, that kind of says it in a nutshell. But some other things they say are interesting points too, that overtreatment with incomplete removal of the organism can result in resistant strains. So, we could be making things worse accidentally, if the organism is there. And overuse of antibiotics, generally, increases other resistance in the environment, which is a bad thing for everybody. You know, it's like the antibiotics in animal feed, you know, it just makes a bad...

Will Falconer, DVM 14:55

Making superbugs.

Todd Cooney, DVM 14:56

Yeah, superbugs for everybody. Another thing they mentioned is that immunity's not permanent and treated dogs can be reinfected. And I couldn't really find much more information about that or why they said that. But I thought one of the best reasons that they said to avoid it is that detection of positive results could cause unnecessary owner distress. And...

Will Falconer, DVM 15:19

Yeah.

Todd Cooney, DVM 15:20

And expense. And potential drug reactions in dogs not needing treatment. I mean, these people go through a lot of anxiety, in many cases, when they find out that the dog tests positive, and then we have to do this, then we have to wait several months to see if things are going to be okay. So...

Will Falconer, DVM 15:38

So, I think you and I are at odds with the ACVIM on one main point. If they're recommending that a positive titer dog gets doxycycline for four weeks, you and I would not recommend that, right?

Todd Cooney, DVM 15:55

Absolutely. Yeah, I would not recommend it either. And it really sounds like they aren't really recommending that, although they did state that. Let's see how they worded that. Okay, so what they said in that section of the article, they said if the dog really has Lyme-related illness, you know, if this dog really has symptoms, and really is sick and tests positive, and has symptoms that relate to Lyme disease, it usually responds quickly to treatment. So, doxycycline, or another antibiotic. So, they preface that section with that statement. So, it's not that they would just treat any dog that tests positive, but a dog that has symptoms that match.

Will Falconer, DVM 16:34

Okay, okay.

Todd Cooney, DVM 16:35

Yeah, so...

Will Falconer, DVM 16:36

That's an important point though.

Todd Cooney, DVM 16:37

Yeah. Yeah, I'm glad we didn't gloss over that, because I think that's pretty major. But yeah, and that would really, most dogs I see, or, if not all dogs I see, fall into that category. And also, dogs of most people I talked to that have had that experience.

Will Falconer, DVM 16:54

Yeah, the ones I hear about, that write me or post a comment on my blog or something, will say, "What do I do? What do I do? I've got this high Lyme test, or this positive—my dog has

got Lyme." Just like they come into your office and say, "My dog's got Lyme." And so, if veterinarians are still misreading the ACVIM, not getting that part about if they're ill, then give the doxycycline, we're going to be wiping out a lot of good microbiomes, aren't we?

Todd Cooney, DVM 17:26

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Yeah, because putting a—not that it's that harsh of an antibiotic, but when you're doing it for extended periods like that, it's bound to have some detrimental effects on the animal.

Will Falconer, DVM 17:39

And the more and more we read, and the more research comes out, I mean, for the last decade, we've been hearing about the microbiome.

Todd Cooney, DVM 17:46

Exactly.

Will Falconer, DVM 17:47

That we're many more times, probably 10 times more, bacterial and viral presence cells than we are human cells in our own body.

Todd Cooney, DVM 17:58

Exactly.

Will Falconer, DVM 17:58

So, the same's got to be true in the dog.

Todd Cooney, DVM 18:00

Yeah.

Will Falconer, DVM 18:01

We don't want to, you know, just jump with a knee-jerk reaction to give a month's worth of antibiotics to somebody who's not sick, right?

Todd Cooney, DVM 18:08

Exactly. Yeah, I think that's exactly right. And I really think the ACVIM would agree with that. And, it might be something that needs to be, the veterinary community needs to be reminded of that. I've thought of writing a letter to the editor of the AVMA, a fellow who already isn't very fond of me, but... We had a little bit of an exchange a few years ago, I wrote an article about how vets shouldn't be vaccinating sick animals. And he disagreed with me. He thought it was no problem.

Will Falconer, DVM 18:41

Oh, my god.

Todd Cooney, DVM 18:42

And I said, "Oh, well..."

Will Falconer, DVM 18:43

Oh, my god.

Todd Cooney, DVM 18:44

I said, "Well, there's the problem. You're the editor of AVMA and that's how you feel."

Will Falconer, DVM 18:50

Oh, my god.

Todd Cooney, DVM 18:51

He was a board-certified surgeon. So, he probably isn't vaccinating animals anyway, he's just doing surgery. But, you know, he pretty much wanted to rewrite my article so it would say what he wanted it to say. And I said, "No, this is the op-ed section. You know, I paid my membership, I want to have my opinion expressed."

Will Falconer, DVM 19:11

Unbelievable. I mean, even the labels on every vaccine says, "Don't vaccinate an unhealthy animal," right? They're only for use in healthy dogs, cats, ferrets, whatever.

Todd Cooney, DVM 19:21

It's vaccine 101. Yeah. But a lot of times, it just gets tossed out the window. And...

Will Falconer, DVM 19:26

Yeah.

Todd Cooney, DVM 19:27

So...

Will Falconer, DVM 19:28

Yeah, I think there's a lot of craziness that, you know, we have to help our animal owners become aware of these things.

Todd Cooney, DVM 19:36

Yeah. Yeah, I think so.

Will Falconer, DVM 19:38

So, if someone approaches them in a white coat with a stethoscope around their neck and says, "Look at this test, we've got a Lyme positive dog," the owner needs to be able to say, "Well, look at my dog. Is my dog acting sick to you? She's sure not to me."

Todd Cooney, DVM 19:53

Yeah. And this is definitely a situation where the owner would have to maybe resist that bullying, you know, if there tend to be some bullying.

Will Falconer, DVM 20:00

Yeah.

Todd Cooney, DVM 20:01

Because they do tend to pressure people, I think, sometimes, and try to force them into

doing certain things, either through fear or guilt or some other emotion.

Will Falconer, DVM 20:12

Yeah, yeah. A short-term fix I've often offered people for that is, "Thanks for your information." Here's something you can say to your vet in that situation: "Thanks for your information. I appreciate your diagnostic work. And we're gonna go home and think about this."

Todd Cooney, DVM 20:26

Yeah.

Will Falconer, DVM 20:27

Right on the spot, you don't have to say yes or no. You can say, "We're gonna think about this."

Todd Cooney, DVM 20:32

Yeah, we just want to take a little time, think this over. Yeah, there's nothing wrong with that. And, you know, you can certainly say it to your vet or to your own doctor or your dentist or anyone, really, that's making health decisions for you.

Will Falconer, DVM 20:44

Absolutely.

Todd Cooney, DVM 20:44

And then the last thing, Will, that I was going to mention before I forgot, at the conclusion, it says the majority of the ACVIM members surveyed do not recommend Lyme vaccination, even in endemic areas, due to poor efficacy and safety concerns. So, I thought that was extremely interesting. Because, you know, Lyme vaccine isn't really considered a core vaccine for dogs, you know, one that every dog should have, like distemper, Parvo, and rabies are probably the most common ones considered that way. But it is recommended for a lot of dogs though, regardless of their location, their geographic location, their lifestyle, things like that. I've seen little chihuahuas who never left the house—they've got a Lyme vaccine. And you know, things like that.

Will Falconer, DVM 21:37

Yeah. Yeah.

Todd Cooney, DVM 21:38

But just knowing that this body of experts, you know, the gurus of internal medicine say, "We don't recommend this vaccine routinely." So...

Will Falconer, DVM 21:47

That's important as well. Yeah. So, there's another point for consumers to say, "What's your list of vaccines that you're recommending? No, I don't want this one." You can make choices about that.

Todd Cooney, DVM 21:57

Yeah. Absolutely. Yeah, so I think people can make an informed decision, you know, the

more they know, it empowers them to be confident about that.

Will Falconer, DVM 22:05

Yes. And here's board-certified experts who've taken extra training saying, "We don't think the vaccine's a good idea." I think that weighs in a lot.

Todd Cooney, DVM 22:14

I think so. Yeah.

Will Falconer, DVM 22:15

That's just not a couple of holistic vets saying it, like, you know, we know vaccines can be damaging. This is the experts.

Todd Cooney, DVM 22:22

Yeah, exactly. Yeah, I would think that would carry extra weight coming from those type of people, like you said, compared to homeopathic or holistic vets. Because we've been saying this for a long time, but the conventional community pretty much shrugs it off and considers it not a good way to look at it. But here, you've got a group of experts saying otherwise, so...

Will Falconer, DVM 22:46

Yeah, yeah.

Todd Cooney, DVM 22:47

Yeah, I was pretty happy to find that article. I wonder when they'll do their next update, and what it will include.

Will Falconer, DVM 22:55

Yeah, I mean, if they updated from 2006 to 2018 and this is their final that you're sharing with us on this episode, I think it's unlikely to change. It sounds like they're not whitewashing it and saying, "We're just going to be safe and treat everybody that's got a positive titer, nor are we going to recommend a vaccine that we find is neither safe nor efficacious." Those are the two words that everybody ought to ask about a procedure of any kind. Does it work? And is it safe?

Todd Cooney, DVM 23:28

Yeah, right. That's right. Or is it necessary? Yeah.

Will Falconer, DVM 23:32

So, that's been really enlightening. And you and I, I think neither one of us have seen a bunch of Lyme sick dogs, and it kind of harkens back to the argument of the germ theory versus looking at something else called the terrain. So, are you thinking that's maybe what's keeping most of these dogs from getting sick, is that they've just had a healthy terrain, healthy enough to withstand this?

Todd Cooney, DVM 23:58

Yeah, I think that's probably it. Yeah. And I think, you know, there must be something about the dog in general that makes it a less likely host for this disease, less susceptible, just as a species. And they're not sure about cats. Not much work has been done in cats, but it's

more of a minor concern, I think, with a lot of folks. Cats don't tend to have much tick trouble, for one thing. They tend to groom themselves pretty well. But one other thing I came across was that, one source said it's probably more accurate to classify Lyme disease as an immunodeficiency disease, because the organism is not the actual cause of illness in most cases, but people are only affected and become ill if they're predisposed, you know, if they're in a state of being susceptible. So, something has happened to them. As homeopaths, we would say that they have a chronic disease that's made them more susceptible, and then they fall ill to this disease. And this writer said an interesting thing, he said other examples of immunodeficiency diseases in dogs are Parvo and kennel cough. And I had heard that about Parvo, I hadn't really heard it about kennel cough. I don't know if you had come across that thinking.

Will Falconer, DVM 25:11

I haven't, no.

Todd Cooney, DVM 25:13

But that kind of makes sense, though. Because if you look at kennel cough, where does it happen mostly? In dogs that are stressed out in boarding situations, they're overcrowded, you know, and they're probably immunocompromised from that. Plus, they get a vaccine on the way in the door, the live virus vaccine. And so...

Will Falconer, DVM 25:33

Uh-huh. That's a stressor in itself, yeah.

Todd Cooney, DVM 25:35

Yeah, stressor in itself. So...

Will Falconer, DVM 25:38

And you've done a lot of work with Parvo. So, when you heard that that's also an immunodeficiency disease, did that resonate with you?

Todd Cooney, DVM 25:45

Yeah, I think so. I think so. And I think it fits what we've seen in practice, where the majority of dogs that get sick from Parvo have been vaccinated. And the majority of dogs that die from Parvo have a history of vaccination. Compared to the dog off the street that's never been to the vet, they get Parvo, they get a couple of remedies, they're out, they're back home the next day, a lot of times. Like it was no big deal. So, I'd much rather treat an unvaccinated dog than a vaccinated one, any day.

Will Falconer, DVM 26:16

Yeah, yeah. They're healthier. And the vaccines themselves, I think, don't we know some of the fractions of the vaccines are immunosuppressive themselves?

Todd Cooney, DVM 26:24

Oh, absolutely, yeah. Yeah, I think they've shown that the immune response really takes a dive, and one or two weeks after the vaccine, they become more immunocompromised in general.

Will Falconer, DVM 26:37

Uh-huh, uh-huh.

Todd Cooney, DVM 26:38

Well, we're seeing it now, I think, with COVID-19 vaccine, although this is a different situation, but... Or even after a flu shot, a lot of people have had that experience, they get a flu shot and then they get sick or they get the flu. Like a week or, in the next week or two, and they think, "Oh, I guess it didn't work," but it may have contributed.

Will Falconer, DVM 26:56

Yeah, dropped your immunity and got you sick.

Todd Cooney, DVM 26:58

Yeah.

Will Falconer, DVM 26:59

We'll see it in puppies a lot, I think, after vaccine, right? Isn't it common to get like coccidia, or one of those diarrheal diseases after a puppy shot?

Todd Cooney, DVM 27:10

Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Or, you know, they'll actually break with Parvo a lot of times, in the week, week or so following one of their puppy shots. That's a real common scenario. Yeah.

Will Falconer, DVM 27:21

Aha, yeah.

Todd Cooney, DVM 27:23

But it'd be interesting...

Will Falconer, DVM 27:24

So, along those same lines, you mentioned the steroids earlier, so if your animal's on prednisone for some reason, or some other form of steroid, that's an equivalent immune suppressor to having stress, like ongoing stress—being locked up in a kennel and barking dogs all around, and cold weather stress or whatever it is that stresses you—that brings the cortisol level up and drops the immune system down.

Todd Cooney, DVM 27:52

Yeah, absolutely. I think you could say that. So, dogs that are on long-term medication like prednisone, they probably are living in that state of stress or borderline immunosuppression, immunodeficiency.

Will Falconer, DVM 28:06

Yeah, yeah. Interesting.

Todd Cooney, DVM 28:08

It's a good point. So...

Will Falconer, DVM 28:09

So, to wrap up, I think, we're on the same page, it sounds like, that if you've got an animal who's healthy and well, and comes back with a Lyme titer that's positive, and they say, "That means he's got Lyme, we better treat this dog," you have every right and every common sense on your side to say, "Wait a minute, I'm not going to treat this animal. Look at him. He's well." Agreed?

Todd Cooney, DVM 28:35

Yeah, I think you'd be well within good reason to do that. I would just walk away from that situation, yeah, and say, "I want to think about this." And then just not do it. Or even better yet, consult with a veterinary homeopath, who can further set your fears at ease, and treat any actual disease that your dog might have. Because it's pretty rare to see a dog or an animal that doesn't have some level of chronic disease. So, most of them can benefit from homeopathic treatment, just like we can.

Will Falconer, DVM 29:11

Sure, sure.

Todd Cooney, DVM 29:12

Yeah.

Will Falconer, DVM 29:13

Yeah, that's been my go-to recommendation.

Todd Cooney, DVM 29:15

Yeah. And that's how I first meet a lot of people, is over a positive Lyme test. And, you know, the worry and the fear that accompanies that, they find me somehow, or someone points them to me, and we talk about that. So, I love that, because it's like you've helped someone else get out of the woods.

Will Falconer, DVM 29:36

Yes, exactly.

Todd Cooney, DVM 29:37

And you know, find a good path, they're lost in the woods until then looking for answers. I know, because I've been there myself, and it's not a fun place to be.

Will Falconer, DVM 29:46

In that state of fear?

Todd Cooney, DVM 29:47

Yeah. Or just not sure what to do, looking for answers, trying to find some guidance. Yeah, a lot of that back in my conventional days where, you know, it was pretty much just quick approach, and it just didn't feel right a lot of times. There was something about it that didn't quite resonate with me. And now I know why. I think I was meant to do homeopathy.

Will Falconer, DVM 30:12

Yeah, yeah. So much more fulfilling.

Todd Cooney, DVM 30:14

Yeah, yeah.

Will Falconer, DVM 30:15

Well, thanks, Todd. I think this has been a really interesting topic and I think it's going to help a lot of people realize that titer does not equal disease. If you've got a positive titer, you don't need to give an antibiotic for a month. And the final thing, I think, Todd, is, what about vaccines for Lyme?

Todd Cooney, DVM 30:33

Yeah, I'm not a fan at all. Of course, I'm not a big fan of most vaccines. The only vaccine we even use in my practice right now is the rabies vaccine. That's only because it's legally required. And we use it sparingly. I mean, we don't give it to animals that are sick. So, we'll write waivers and postpone it for those animals and try to work on their level of health. But yeah, as far as Lyme disease vaccine, you've got a vaccine for a disease that's not really proven to be a real threat to dogs, it doesn't seem to make dogs sick. Even in experimental settings, they can't cause a disease in the dog. And also, the ACVIM experts have said it's not safe, and it's not effective. So, I think that's three strikes and you're out, with that vaccine.

Will Falconer, DVM 31:21

Yeah. If they're not recommending it, I don't know how your vet can stand up to that.

Todd Cooney, DVM 31:25

Exactly. Yeah,

Will Falconer, DVM 31:26

I think you're well within your rights to say no to that one.

Todd Cooney, DVM 31:29

Yeah, it's pretty hard to say that as a general practitioner you know more than the experts. I mean, maybe that's true in some situations, but I think it's kind of an arrogant position to have.

Will Falconer, DVM 31:39

Yeah, yeah. Well, thanks ever so much, Todd, I appreciate you coming on and clearing the air on this Lyme business.

Todd Cooney, DVM 31:46

Yeah, my pleasure.

Will Falconer, DVM 31:47

It looks like we've got a disease that's not a big one to worry about.

Todd Cooney, DVM 31:50

Yeah, I would say there are many other things that are better to worry about. Or maybe it's better not to worry about things in general.

Will Falconer, DVM 31:58

In general.

Todd Cooney, DVM 31:59

Yeah.

Will Falconer, DVM 32:00

Just take positive steps, get some good food in that bowl, and keep that terrain healthy, keep that animal healthy.

Todd Cooney, DVM 32:05

Yeah, I always encourage folks to learn as much as they can about nutrition, and just about managing stress, you know, in their own life and in their animal's life, because they really feed off of our stress. There have been some studies recently that have shown that that's true. And so, I always suspected it was the case, but now they're documenting it with some real science. So, that's interesting.

Will Falconer, DVM 32:27

Aha, aha.

Todd Cooney, DVM 32:29

Yeah.

Will Falconer, DVM 32:30

Perfect. Alright, everybody. Well, that's another episode. And we will see you next week with something new and interesting. So, stay tuned. Remember, you can subscribe to Vital Animal Podcast at Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen. And we will look for you on the next time around. Thanks, Todd.

Todd Cooney, DVM 32:52

Yeah, thanks so much, Will. Nice talking with you.

Will Falconer, DVM 32:55

Bye for now.