

**THE ANIMAL DISEASES ACT**

From 7th April 2000, all dogs and cats in the RSA must be vaccinated against rabies. The vaccine must be officially registered and the owner must obtain a certificate proving the immunisation from the veterinarian.

The first vaccination (after three months of age) must be followed by a second (booster) between one and nine months later and then once every three years.

So let's keep it simple: Ask the vet specifically to use Eurican of Merial, which is a combination of all the recommended vaccines and put the date in your diary. This way you make sure that your dog and your family are protected against disease and you against prosecution!



**Update on Canine Ehrlichiosis**

Canine ehrlichiosis is a group of diseases of dogs which only came to the attention of researchers in the eighties. Even then, it remained fairly obscure until it was found that the bacteria also cause disease in humans. In an article in the Journal of the South African Veterinary Association by PJ Kelly, a review was given of current knowledge of the diseases and conditions caused by at least nine species of Ehrlichia bacteria.

Interestingly, the members of the genus include Cowdria, which causes the deadly tick-borne disease Heartwater in ruminants. The most important of the Ehrlichia spp. is E. canis, which causes canine monocytic ehrlichiosis and which occurs worldwide, including in Southern Africa.

Because of strain variations, the symptoms and severity of this tickborne disease varies markedly, which complicates accurate diagnosis. In many cases the owner may not even be aware that his dog is infected. Typically, the initial acute phase consists of lethargy, depression, enlarged glands and sometimes nose bleeding. In the case of active working dogs or gun dogs which have to cover large distances, the dog will not be able to sustain its performance and will tire very easily, but may apparently

recover at home. After the acute phase, the disease becomes subclinical and the dog shows no symptoms, but remains infected. This stage may persist for 4 months to 10 years. Some dogs can spontaneously rid themselves of the infection.

Kelly says that a severe, life-threatening chronic form of the disease may develop, which includes weight loss, fever, pallor, water retention in the legs and bleeding, often with secondary infections and eventual death.

The diagnosis can only be confirmed by serological (blood) tests.

Treatment with antibiotics often appears to be effective, but does not clear up the infection. Kelly says that tetracyclines, especially doxycycline, is the treatment of choice. It must be given for **at least two to six weeks!** In this case, the diligence of the owner is of critical importance. The treatment success rate is generally no better than about 45% of cases, particularly if the dog is already in the chronic phase.

Kelly does not mention prevention, but until a vaccine is developed the best common sense prevention must be to make sure you do not skip the monthly Frontline treatment and to take your dog to the vet even if he just looks a little bit 'out of sorts'. Δ

**Fairwood Ringo, the legendary pointer of Frank Poretti**

