

Valley Fever Treatment

Valley fever is a fungal infection that can affect the lungs, bones, brain, skin, and other internal organs. This disease usually takes at least 3 months to resolve and may require ongoing medications for life.

Make sure that your pet is eating and drinking during the treatment. Call for directions if his/her appetite is poor or if he/she seems to be losing weight. Recheck bloodwork for valley fever every 3 months until the titer is negative.

Valley fever treatment and diagnostic recommendations:

1. Anti-fungal therapies:

A. Fluconazole- this is a commonly used anti-fungal medication used to help kill the fungus. This medication is typically given 2 times per day for at least 3 months. Occasionally different anti-fungal medications are used if fluconazole is not working, or if your pet is too sick for this medication.

*approximately \$40 for 1 month of treatment for a 50lb dog

B. Itraconazole- this anti-fungal medication is often used when animals are not improving with fluconazole therapy. This medication is typically given once per day (some animals may need up to 2 times per day) for at least 3 months. Liver enzyme elevations may be more commonly observed with this medication. This medication is less absorbable in the gi tract and must be administered with a meal in capsule form.

*approximately \$270 for 1 month of treatment for a 50lb dog

C. Voriconazole- this anti-fungal medication is often used when animals have not improved on fluconazole and itraconazole therapy. This medication has similar absorption and treatment effects as fluconazole, and has been observed to have greater potency in laboratory studies. This medication is typically given 2 times per day for at least 3 months. Medication should be given on an empty stomach, at least 1 hour before or after feeding. Should be avoided or used as a last resort in cats due to adverse effects.

*approximately \$150 for 1 month of treatment for a 50lb dog

The most common side effects from these oral anti-fungal medications include (but are not limited to): inappetence, vomiting/diarrhea, elevated liver enzymes, and birth defects in fetuses. Please call for instructions if inappetence or vomiting/diarrhea is noted within a few days of starting these medications. Bloodwork is rechecked during treatment to monitor liver enzymes and valley fever titer.

D. Amphotericin b lipid based formulation (abelcet, ambisome)- this is an anti-fungal medication that kills fungal infections. This treatment will not cure valley fever. It is believed to shorten the length of time that oral medications may be necessary long term. This medication must be administered intravenously in hospital and has the potential to cause kidney damage. Treatments are typically administered 3 times per week for a 2-5 week duration, with bloodwork monitoring weekly.

*approximately \$1,500.00 weekly (includes iv catheter, dextrose fluids, abelcet treatment, bloodwork once weekly, and hbot treatments)

2 week treatment approximately \$2,500.00

5 week treatment approximately \$6,000.00

2. Anti-inflammatory medications- rimadyl/carprofen or metacam is used to help with fever and reduce inflammation. This allows the anti-fungal medication to work more effectively. It is typically given for the first few weeks of treatment, but may be given for the entire treatment period.

3. Hyperbaric oxygen therapy- this treatment is useful for a variety of conditions to stimulate the immune system. Animals are placed in a large chamber with 100% oxygen under pressures 1.5 to 3 times normal atmospheric pressure. These treatments can last from 1-2 hours and are given 1-3 times daily. The total number of treatments necessary can vary per specific disease or patient response.

4. Give vitamin c: 200-250mg (grocery store for humans) twice a day. This helps stimulate the immune system, and helps with absorption of the fluconazole.

5. Start missing link (petsmart/petco). This is an immune booster/vitamin supplement that appears to speed recovery from valley fever.

6. Recheck valley fever titer every 3 months until the titer is negative.