Rhodococcus

According to these authors, the percentage of the U.S. population that can be considered permanently or temporarily immunocompromised varies from 3.5% to as high as 20%. This article is an excellent review for clinicians and contains practical information on transmission and prevention of exposure to the above-mentioned diseases. In general, veterinarians seeking to minimize a client’s exposure to bacterial zoonotic diseases can do so by making some common sense recommendations: year-round flea control; feeding pets cooked, high-quality pet food, not raw food. They should be provided with clean water and not allowed to hunt or roam. New puppies and kittens should be avoided because they are more likely to have contagious diseases. Handwashing and special attention to food handling are especially important in preventing these diseases.

COMMENTARY: According to these authors, the percentage of the U.S. population that can be considered permanently or temporarily immunocompromised varies from 3.5% to as high as 20%. This article is an excellent review for clinicians and contains practical information on transmission and prevention of exposure to the above-mentioned diseases. In general, veterinarians seeking to minimize a client’s exposure to bacterial zoonotic diseases can do so by making some common sense recommendations: year-round flea control; feeding pets cooked, high-quality pet food, not raw food. They should be provided with clean water and not allowed to hunt or roam. New puppies and kittens should be avoided because they are more likely to have contagious diseases. Handwashing and special attention to food handling are especially important in preventing these diseases.

Mitotane & Hepatopathy

An 8-year-old dog was diagnosed with hyperadrenocorticism based on a persistently elevated alkaline phosphatase level and abnormal results of an adrenocorticotropic hormone—stimulation test. The dog had no other abnormal clinical or physical examination findings. Mitotane therapy was initiated at 29 mg/kg PO Q 24 H for 5 days, then maintained at 7.2 mg/kg PO four times weekly. The dog developed anorexia approximately 2 weeks later so mitotane was discontinued, and a tapering dose of prednisone (0.3 mg/kg PO Q 24 H) was given. Intermittent anorexia, lethargy, and occasional vomiting continued for another 2 weeks, at which point the dog became acutely icteric. Laboratory testing revealed markedly elevated liver enzymes and bilirubin, prolonged prothrombin time, and low blood urea nitrogen and glucose—all supportive of decreased hepatic function. Laparoscopy and biopsy results were consistent with an acute hepatotoxic event. The dog recovered after supportive care and was discharged on 5-adenosylmethionine, vitamin E, ursodiol, and prednisone. Owners reported the dog as being healthy 3 months later. The authors suspected mitotane-associated liver failure, although other possible explanations of the illness included exposure to an unknown hepatotoxic substance in the time between stopping mitotane therapy and the onset of icterus, or the presence of subclinical liver disease before mitotane therapy that predisposed the dog to a mitotane reaction. The authors point out that the length of time between initiation of mitotane therapy and onset of clinical signs was similar to that in dogs that experience carprofen toxicity, indicating that mitotane-associated hepatotoxicity might be the result of an idiosyncratic reaction or could be secondary to an adverse immune-mediated response.

COMMENTARY: Treating disease is not always benign and can carry its own inherent risks. The adrenocorticolytic drug mitotane, used to treat pituitary-dependent hyperadrenocorticism, has reported side effects that include anorexia, lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea, and hypoadrenocorticism. In addition, screening tests for hyperadrenocorticism have variable sensitivities and specificities, making definitive diagnosis of this disease potentially difficult. As the study authors suggest, in animals without clinical signs it is worth considering making this diagnosis only after extensive testing.—Jennifer L. Schori, VMD


Mycobacterium marinum, which is associated with fish tanks, and fish enthusiasts are at increased risk.


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