

Dog owners warned to stay alert as cases of mystery dog illness reoccur

This autumn, we have once again issued an alert to dog owners across the country, asking them to stay vigilant for signs of a mystery illness which can kill dogs.

Seasonal Canine Illness (SCI) claimed the lives of several dogs during autumn 2009, 2010 and 2011. Cases have now reoccurred in 2012.

The illness which comes on very quickly, usually within 24 to 72 hours of dogs walking in woodland in autumn, causes vomiting, diarrhoea and lethargy. These clinical signs are common and non-specific, but it is their onset within only a few hours of walking in woodlands that is distinctive. We advise any dog owners who see these signs in their pet to access veterinary treatment immediately.

Dr Richard Newton, of the AHT, said: "Our SCI investigation has been ongoing since we were first alerted to the illness in the autumn of 2010. Since then we have had more and more cases reported to us each autumn, but thankfully the number of dogs which are surviving has increased. We hope this is due to more owners being aware of the signs of SCI and accessing veterinary help as soon as possible."

Thanks to funding from The Kennel Club, we have been able to step up our SCI investigation in 2012 and employ a dedicated SCI investigator. With the help of dog owners, we hope to get closer to pinpointing the cause of the illness during 2012.

Richard Newton added: "We want to arm dog owners with as much information as we can. Unfortunately we are looking for a small needle in a very large haystack but information gleaned in 2011 has helped us to narrow this search area."

Our investigation continues at five previously-affected sites across the UK:

- Clumber Park, Nottinghamshire
- Rendlesham Forest, Suffolk
- Sandringham Estate, Norfolk
- Sherwood Forest, Nottinghamshire
- Thetford Forest, Norfolk.

As part of the investigation, we have visited one of the study sites, Sandringham Estate, with experts from the Natural History Museum and the Institute of Zoology. Both visits were designed to identify any changes in flora or fauna that could be occurring at this particular site in the run up to, and at the time of, cases occurring.

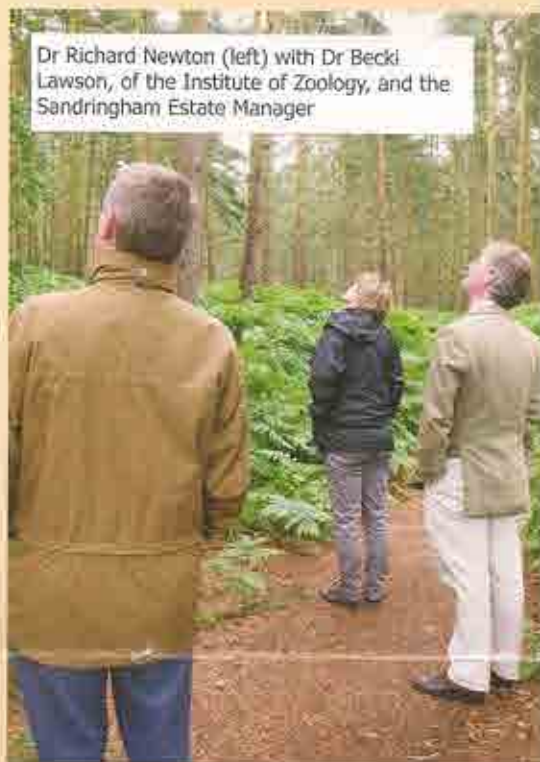
We intend to call further on the expertise of these organisations during our investigation but we also need dog owners to continue to help by providing information.

We are asking dog owners, who have walked at any of the five sites, to complete an online questionnaire at www.aht.org.uk/sci

Dr Newton, said: "We desperately need information from dogs who have been walked at any of our study sites, even if they did not become ill. The information we received from owners of dogs who walked at the sites and didn't show clinical signs of SCI is just as important to our investigation, as information from affected dogs."

Whilst our investigation focusses on five study sites, please stay vigilant whilst walking your dog in any woodland area during autumn. If you suspect your dog has SCI, please seek veterinary advice immediately.

For the latest on our SCI investigation visit www.aht.org.uk/sci



Dr Richard Newton (left) with Dr Becki Lawson, of the Institute of Zoology, and the Sandringham Estate Manager



Dr Richard Newton (left) with Dr Mark Spencer, a British field botanist from the Natural History Museum, at Sandringham