Blastomycosis is a fungal disease which poses a deadly threat to dogs. Although known to both veterinary and human medicine for some time, the disease appears to be increasing in both frequency and distribution. Climate change that creates an increase in average temperatures and extremes of flooding and drought will likely enhance the spread of the fungus. While the disease can also be fatal in humans, dogs are especially vulnerable.

Dogs are infected with blasto when they inhale the spores of the fungus, which are found in organic soils along the edges of streams, ponds and lakes. While dogs may be infected at any time of year, the majority of infections occur in warmer weather when the fungus may be producing spores, and when water levels have dropped, allowing the soils to be exposed. Late summer and fall seem to create the conditions which pose the greatest risk. There is no way to determine when or where the fungus may occur, although some areas have higher infection rates than others. The important thing to remember is ***any time a dog enters an area of organic soils that are damp to wet at some point in the year, it is at risk of contracting blastomycosis.***

This disease, therefore, poses the greatest risk to any dog that spends time in a rural to semi-rural environment, especially those that use their noses to work. Any hunting dog is at enhanced risk- those who hunt for waterfowl, raccoon, rabbits, and even upland gamebirds, as all these species eventually congregate at some type of water. Dogs used for tracking and other search and rescue activities are also at high risk for inhaling the spores. Even pets that accompany their families vacations that includes hiking and swimming can be infected.

Blastomycosis is deadly. About 50% of infected dogs die, even with treatment. Many cases are misdiagnosed. By the time a dog begins to show symptoms or the correct diagnosis is made, it is usually too late. In addition, of those that survive the treatment almost 25% relapse, usually within a year. The treatment regime requires a prolonged period (minimum of 60 days) on expensive antifungal drugs. The cost of treating the average retriever will be in excess of $1000, even if the dog does not suffer a relapse. A dog does not acquire any immunity after surviving blastomycosis once and can be infected again.

Now comes the main point of this letter. There is a real opportunity to prevent any more dogs from dying from this terrible disease. ***A vaccine has finally been developed that can protect dogs from blastomycosis.*** The vaccine only needs a pharmaceutical company that is willing to take the initial risk of final clinical trials and actually begin production. A company has been in contact with the vaccine's developer, but does not want to pursue the vaccine. The company fears there will not be enough economic support from the canine community to make it worthwhile for them to proceed.

Please consider contacting the pharmaceutical company representative on behalf of your club or organization! Write him and let him know how desperate dog owners are to protect their dogs from blastomycosis. Emphasize that your members will support the vaccine if it were made available to them. Distemper and parvovirus once killed millions of dogs before a vaccine was made available. Now most of us can vaccinate our puppies against both and never have to worry about losing them. We could do the same with blasto if we can convince this company to make this vaccine commercially available. But the company will need to hear from many dog owners or their representatives in order to convince them to start production.

Please send your letters of support to:

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For more information on the blastomycosis vaccine, contact:

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Thank you for taking the time to send a letter to support this crucial vaccine development.
Your participation may be critical in saving the lives of countless dogs from this terrible disease.