

A Dog Disease People Catch

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A new disease has been identified, probably caused by a virus among dog owning people. It apparently has been in existence for a considerable time but only recently has anyone identified this disease, and begun to study it. It is called the Acquired Canine Obsessive Syndrome (ACOS). At first ACOS was originally considered to be psychological in nature, but after two young researchers suddenly decided to become show breeders, it became evident that it was an infectious agent. Epidemiologists have identified three stages of this disease. Read about the symptoms to see if you have fallen victim to ACOS.

Stage I (Early Symptoms)

1. You think that any show within 300 miles is near by.
2. You begin to enjoy getting up at 5 a.m. in the morning to walk and feed dogs.
3. You think it's fun to spend several hours a day grooming dogs
4. You think you're being frugal if you spend less than \$3,000 dollars a year on shows.
5. You can't remember what it was like to have just one dog.

Stage II (Definitely Infected)

1. When choosing a new car the most important factor is how many crates you can fit in it.
2. When you look for a house, the first thing you think of is how many dogs you can kennel on the property.
3. Your dog food bill is higher than your family's.
4. You spend as much on veterinarians as on doctors.
5. You have no money because of showing dogs.
6. You have to buy more than one vehicle a year because you keep burning out the 7 year or 70,000 mile warranty going to shows.
7. You have more pictures of the dogs than of your family.
8. Your idea of a fun vacation is to hit a long show circuit.
9. Most of your conversations revolve around the dogs.

Stage III (Terminal Stage)

1. You wake up in the morning and find out that you put the kids in the crates and the dogs in the beds last night.

2. You know each dog's name and pedigree, but can't figure out who that stranger in the house is; it turns out to be your husband/wife/boyfriend/girlfriend.
3. Your neighbors keep insisting that those kids running around your house bothering the dogs are yours.
4. You keep telling the kids to "heel" and can't understand why they won't and why they keep objecting to the choke chain.
5. You cash in the kid's college trust fund to campaign the dogs.
6. You've been on the road showing dogs so long that you can't remember where you live.
7. Your family tells you "It's either the dogs or us," you choose the dogs.

Do you have this dreaded disease? Well there is hope. Researchers have found that most cases seem to stop at Stage II and remain chronic.

Currently several Stage III ACOS patients have been confined to isolation wards where they are being studied to gain a better understanding of this disease. It is a sad sight to see formerly vibrant people as they shuffle around their rooms in endless triangle or L-patterns, making odd hand motions (as if holding a lead and baiting a dog), and making chirping noises. Merely saying the word "Westminster" can send them into an uncontrollable frenzy. Unfortunately, there isn't much hope for these cases, but with time and research to further understand this disease, there may be hope to come up with a cure.

Attempts are being made to isolate the causative agent in the hopes of being able to develop a vaccine in the future. An interesting sidelight of this disease seems to be that exposure at an early age has an immunizing effect. Several people afflicted with ACOS at Stage II and Stage III have close family members (children, husbands, wives) who have absolutely no disease. It is thought by some researchers that this may be due to environmental effects to an age-related immune function or to the fact that those at these stages of the disease tend not to associate with their close family members possibly due to the memory deficit induced by the disease; that is, in that they don't remember that they have close family members?

What can be done to prevent this disease? Until a cure is found, prevention is the measure. Avoid kennels advertising "show stock," since it may be that dogs are carriers of the disease. Leave town on those days that the local newspapers inform you of a show in the area. If you inadvertently come into contact with an ACOS afflicted person, leave as soon as possible (they do tend to cling), and thoroughly shower, preferably with germicidal soap. If you are living with an ACOS afflicted person, take comfort that, if you haven't succumbed yet, you are probably safe.

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