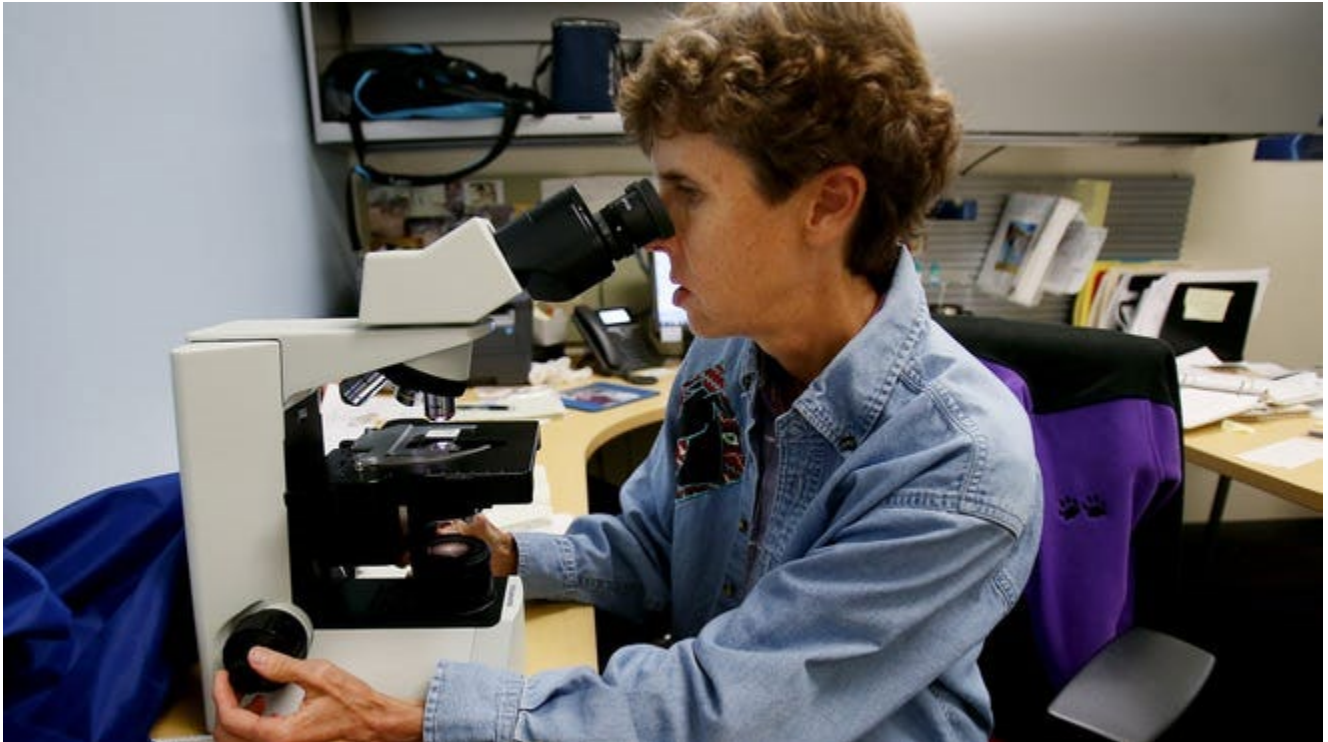


UofA researchers seek approval of first Valley Fever vaccine for pets

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In Arizona, about 60,000 dogs get Valley Fever each year, but that could change after a vaccine developed at the University of Arizona is approved.

The researchers hope the federal government will approve their vaccine within the next year so veterinarians can begin administering it to dogs and other animals they think might benefit. Cats and even zoo animals can get valley fever.

It took 12 years to develop the vaccine for dogs, and the data shows it works, said John Galgiani, MD, director of the Valley Fever Center for Excellence and a professor of medicine in the Division of Infectious Diseases at the U of A College of Medicine – Tucson.

Valley fever is caused by a fungus that lives in the soil in parts of California and the Southwest. It affects dogs more than humans because they live lower to the ground, and treatment is expensive. Some families euthanize their dogs when they contract the infection because they cannot afford the cure, Galgiani said.

The disease can be debilitating for humans and animals, causing respiratory problems, joint pain and sometimes even death.

The University of Arizona vaccine is the first to combat any type of fungal disease and represents a major innovation for a human vaccine.

"Half of all infections in the United States are occurring in Maricopa County, so we really should take responsibility for this problem," Galgiani said.

In addition: The New Valley Fever vaccine for dogs is the first in the world to offer protection against a fungal disease

Galgiani's center initially received a grant to work on the dog vaccine on the grounds that if their work was successful in dogs, it could pave the way for immunizing people. Now it may be bearing fruit: The National Institutes of Health recently awarded a contract for up to \$33 million to a pharmaceutical company to begin work on the human aspect.

Galgiani said a vaccine could be available in as little as eight years.

This is great news for residents of Arizona, where the risk of contracting Valley fever and the rate of infections that kill people are similar to those of polio and measles before there were vaccines against those diseases.

According to the University of Arizona, Valley fever disables 20,000 people each year and kills one in 1,000 sufferers.

However, gaining nationwide support for this vaccine is no easy task. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration considers Valley fever a "rare" disease because it affects only a limited market. Almost all cases occur in Arizona and California and simply do not occur on the East Coast.

"The return on investment for small markets is often low, so it is challenging to address rare diseases," Galgiani said. "We would benefit greatly from that."

Valley fever is a menace to man's best friend

Valley fever affects more dogs than it does humans – since they're lower to the ground – and is expensive to treat. The disease can cause limb swelling, heart failure and seizures.



6 to 10%

The share of Arizona dogs who catch valley fever



25%

The share of infected dogs whose whole body is affected by the disease



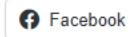
\$60 million

The combined annual cost of treating the 60,000 dogs each year that catch valley fever

If your dog has recently been diagnosed with Valley Fever and you would like to enroll him in a study at the University of Arizona, [follow this link](#).

Contact Caitlin McGlade at caitlin.mcglade@arizonarepublic.com. Follow her on X [@caitmclade](#).

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