

BOURNEMOUTH ECHO 26.2.14

Dog's death caused by mysterious Alabama Rot disease after walks at St Catherine's Hill

5:20am Wednesday 26th February 2014 in [News By Darren Slade](#)



A DOG who was taken ill after woodland walks in Christchurch died from the mysterious Alabama Rot condition, tests have confirmed.

Five-year-old flat-coated retriever Erin, who died earlier this month from acute kidney failure, was only ever walked at St Catherine's Hill.

Vets who treated Erin have urged dog owners to be vigilant for the symptoms of Alabama Rot, which include unusual skin lesions.

But it is not clear how the condition is contracted and vets say there is no reason to avoid any particular places.

Erin's owner Tracy Graham said: "No one knows how it's spread. Everyone has their suspicions but nobody really knows.

"I know for a fact that my dog was eating soil."

Alabama Rot has been linked to at least 12 previous dog deaths in the New Forest and seven elsewhere in the country.

David Walker, head of medicine at specialist vet Anderson Moores of Hursley near Winchester, said: "The message we've been giving out is very much the same – it's worrying but we are still talking about a very small number of dogs that are involved.

"There's no evidence for us to say to pet owners that they should be avoiding any particular areas because there's nothing common – no common specific location, no common type of environment that those pets are being walked in."

He was sceptical about theories that the outbreaks could be linked to former RAF bases.

"I can't give out details but I've spoken to the people you would expect me to talk to about that sort of thing," he said. He said no link had been found.

He said other cases had emerged in other parts of the UK once the story had reached the national media.

Mr Walker said the 'working theory' was that the toxin was ingested by dogs rather than absorbed through the skin lesions.