

Canine Brucellosis: Info for Dog Owners

What is canine brucellosis?

Canine Brucellosis is a disease found in dogs and caused by the bacterium, *Brucella canis*. Infected dogs can also spread the disease to people.

Who gets brucellosis?

Dogs and people can get brucellosis.

Dogs in breeding programs, stray dogs that have not been spayed or neutered, and unowned or free roaming dogs are at higher risk of having brucellosis.

In people, dog breeders and veterinarians are most at risk of infection because of their work with birthing puppies (whelping). People can also get brucellosis from their family pet, but this is much less common.

How is brucellosis spread?

Dog-to-dog spread of brucellosis occurs most often through breeding and by contact with vaginal discharges, semen, birthing fluids, and urine. Contact with an infected dog's blood, milk, saliva, and feces are less common sources of infection.

Brucellosis can spread from dogs to people through contact with an infected dog's birthing fluids and vaginal discharge while birthing puppies. This is why dog breeders and veterinarians are at higher risk. Rarely, brucellosis can be spread from family pets to people through contact with urine, saliva, and other bodily fluids from an infected dog.

What are the symptoms?

In dogs

In female dogs, the most common symptoms are aborted pregnancies, stillbirth, and inability to become pregnant. In males, the primary symptom is the inability to sire puppies. Both sexes may have swollen lymph glands, eye disease, and infections of the spine. However, most infected dogs appear normal and show no symptoms except for infertility. Female dogs can deliver healthy-appearing, but infected puppies.

In people

Brucellosis in people normally causes a fever, headache, swollen lymph glands, night sweats, joint and muscle aches, fatigue, weight loss, and swollen liver and/or spleen. Some people may not have any symptoms.

Can brucellosis be treated?

In dogs

Brucellosis is very difficult to treat and relapses are common. Treatment includes spaying or neutering, giving antibiotics for many months, and frequent blood tests to monitor treatment progress.

Treatment is typically not attempted for dogs in breeding kennels and when dogs cannot be regularly tested and isolated from other dogs and people, potentially for the life of the dog.

In people

Brucellosis is treatable in people. Treatment involves taking antibiotics daily for several

months, regular monitoring, and may also involve surgery.

What are the regulations in Minnesota for dogs infected with canine brucellosis?

Dogs determined by the Minnesota Board of Animal Health to be infected with *Brucella canis* must be permanently quarantined and isolated from other dogs not known to be infected or be euthanized.

For more information about what this means for you and your dog, contact the Board of Animal Health at 651-201-6808.

What is advised for people exposed to an infected dog?

Testing or treatment of people who have been exposed to canine brucellosis infected dogs but do not have symptoms is not recommended.

People that have had contact with the bodily fluids of an infected dog **and** have a high fever and other symptoms consistent with brucellosis should consult their health care provider for testing and call MDH at 651-201-5414.

What is the guidance for dogs that have lived in a household with an infected dog?

- The risk for transmission is highest for sexually intact male and female dogs living in a household with a dog infected with canine brucellosis. Testing any intact dogs that have lived in the home is recommended.
- Testing littermates of a dog infected with canine brucellosis and puppies from an infected mother-dog is also recommended.

- Spayed and neutered dogs living in the home with an infected dog are at less risk. Testing for canine brucellosis is at the discretion of the dog's owner in consultation with their veterinarian.
- Testing dogs that have visited a household with an infected dog for a period of days to weeks is not recommended.

How do you test for brucellosis?

In dogs

A blood sample is tested for the antibodies that fight *Brucella canis*. If a dog tests positive for the antibodies on a screening test, a confirmatory test is done.

In people

There is no antibody screening test for people, so blood culture is used to diagnose *Brucella canis* infection. People who have been diagnosed with brucellosis should be referred to a specialist for treatment.

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*To obtain this information
in a different format, call:
651-201-5414*