



Canine Brucellosis

Canine Brucellosis is a bacterial infection caused by *Brucella Canis* that primarily affects dogs. It is also a zoonosis, meaning that infected dogs can pass the disease to humans.

Until recently, Brucellosis was extremely rare in the UK. However, with increased numbers of dogs being imported from Eastern Europe where the disease is common, the infection rate in the UK has risen. There have also been a small number of cases in people, all of which were traced back to imported dogs with the infection.

Brucellosis in dogs

Infection can cause severe health issues and as it is not usually possible to clear the infection, may lead to chronic illness. Transmission most commonly occurs during breeding but also via contact with blood, urine or saliva and from mothers to puppies.

Symptoms can take some time to develop and include:

- Infertility, miscarriage
- Lethargy and fever
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Lameness or back pain due to infection in the spine or joints

Some dogs have no symptoms but can still spread the disease.

Brucellosis in humans

Symptoms are similar to dogs, with people who are immunosuppressed, young children and pregnant women at greater risk from developing more severe disease. Infection is rarely fatal; most people make a full recovery with antibiotics. However, if not treated serious complications involving the heart, brain and spinal cord can result.



Testing

Brucellosis is usually diagnosed with a blood test. Reputable charities that import dogs from Eastern Europe may test prior to importing and we would encourage you to ask about this. The paperwork should state the date, type of test, the dog's microchip number and be stamped and signed by a vet.

Brucellosis tests rely on the detection of antibodies produced by the immune system. This can take up to 2 months, hence a second test 2 months after import is needed to ensure your new dog really is clear of the disease. We advise that all dogs imported from at-risk countries be tested for the safety of the owners, public, and veterinary staff alike. For screening purposes, we use an in-house test, with results available in less than an hour. Should a dog test positive, follow-up tests by an external lab are needed to make sure the diagnosis is correct.

To protect our staff, this screening test, performed at least 2 months after import, **is a requirement** prior to any routine surgical or dental procedure being carried out at our practice.

In the unfortunate event that your dog has *Brucella Canis*, we will discuss with you all the options and consequences. Whilst we are obliged to notify DEFRA, euthanasia is by no means obligatory, and our practice will happily continue to provide general veterinary care (with the addition of PPE). If hospitalisation, dentistry or surgery are needed, decisions will be based on a case-by-case risk assessment.