

Brucellosis in Dogs

Brucellosis in Dogs: What You Should Know

Brucellosis is a contagious infection that can affect both dogs and humans. While it's not common in the UK, it can be found in dogs imported from countries where the disease is more prevalent. If left undetected, brucellosis can spread, posing serious risks to other dogs and humans alike.

What Causes Brucellosis?

The infection is caused by the bacteria *Brucella canis*. Dogs that have traveled or come from abroad are particularly at risk of contracting this disease. Unfortunately, treatment options are limited, and a diagnosis often leads to tough decisions, including



euthanasia.

Signs of Brucellosis

One of the tricky aspects of brucellosis is that it often shows no obvious signs or symptoms. However, it can have significant impacts on your dog's health, including:

- **Reproductive Issues:** It can affect the reproductive organs, leading to miscarriages or the birth of weak puppies.
- **Joint Pain and Swelling:** Infected dogs may experience pain and swelling in their joints and back.
- **Miscellaneous Symptoms:** Other symptoms can vary but may indicate health problems.

How Does Brucellosis Spread?

Brucellosis spreads from one dog to another through contact, especially during mating or through infected birth fluids and tissues. Puppies born to an infected mother can be born with the disease or acquire it through their mother's milk. It can also be transmitted through urine or even inhaled.

Interestingly, many dogs may not show any signs of illness yet can still transmit the infection to other dogs and humans.

Can Humans Get Brucellosis?

Yes, humans can catch brucellosis, particularly through breathing it in or coming into contact with infected dogs, especially if they have cuts or open wounds. Pregnant women and individuals with weakened immune systems are at greater risk.

Caring for a dog that is miscarrying or giving birth poses a higher risk of transmission. If you're handling a potentially infected dog or dealing with birth fluids, it's crucial to wear gloves, wash your hands thoroughly, and even use a face mask for added protection.

Symptoms of brucellosis in humans can include:

- Fever
- Headaches
- Joint pain
- General flu-like symptoms
- In some cases, more serious complications



Testing for Brucellosis

Since symptoms are often absent, testing is the most effective way to determine if your dog is infected. Your vet can offer testing, especially for dogs that have been imported or have traveled abroad. Testing typically involves two blood tests, and repeat testing may be necessary, depending on the timing of exposure. If your dog tests positive, they will be considered a risk to human health, and authorities must be notified.

Treatment for Brucellosis

If a dog is infected with brucellosis, isolation is essential. Infected dogs should have no contact with other dogs and limited contact with people, particularly those who are pregnant or have weakened immune systems. Because the disease can be spread through urine, exercise should be limited to areas that can be cleaned thoroughly.

Unfortunately, there's currently no effective treatment for brucellosis in dogs. Due to the risks posed to both humans and other animals, euthanasia is often recommended. If you own other dogs, they should also be tested for the infection.

Antibiotics are generally not effective for infected dogs, as they often do not clear the infection, leaving the dog as a continued risk to others.

Is Your Dog at Risk?

Currently, there are very few reported cases of brucellosis in dogs in the UK. Only dogs that have been imported from countries where the disease is more common, spent time abroad, or had close contact with an infected dog are at risk.

By staying informed and vigilant, you can help protect your dog from brucellosis and ensure their health and well-being. If you have any concerns, don't hesitate to reach out to your vet!