



Brittmoore Animal Hospital
1236 Brittmoore Rd.
Houston, TX 77043
713-468-8253 Fax 713-468-8253
repro.bah@gmail.com

Canine Brucellosis (*Brucella canis*)

Canine brucellosis is an important venereal disease in many species. Canine brucellosis is an important cause of reproductive failure in dogs, particularly in kennels. Canine brucellosis is caused by the bacteria *Brucella canis* which can infect dogs and humans.

How can my dog get canine brucellosis?

In dogs, brucellosis is usually spread through contact with infected birthing tissues and fluids such as placenta, aborted fetuses, fetal fluids, and vaginal discharge. Canine brucellosis can also be transmitted by contaminated objects (fomites) such as bedding, equipment, clothing, or shoes. The bacteria can also be found in the milk, blood, and fresh/chilled/frozen semen of infected dogs. Entry of the bacteria can occur by ingestion or direct contact with mucous membranes (eyes, nose, mouth, and vagina), or breaks in the skin.

How does canine brucellosis affect my dog?

Brucella canis causes reproductive problems such as abortions, early pregnancy loss, stillbirth, and infertility) in dogs. Other signs can include inflammation of lymph nodes, behavioral abnormalities, lethargy, back pain, eye problems, joint pain, and weight loss.

Can I get canine brucellosis?

Yes. However, human infections with *Brucella canis* are rare. Direct contact or aerosol exposure to infected animal fluids is the primary way people are infected with canine brucellosis. People can also become infected by ingesting bacteria or by contamination of mucous membranes and breaks in the skin. People who work with dogs in a breeding situation may be at higher risk of exposure. Infection in people causes flu-like signs (fever, night sweats, headaches, back pain).

Who should I contact if I suspect canine brucellosis?

In Dogs – Contact your veterinarian immediately.

In Humans – Contact your physician immediately.

How can I protect my animals from canine brucellosis?

Brucellosis canis can survive for months in the environment under optimum conditions but can be destroyed by heat and some disinfectants. Thoroughly clean and disinfect areas exposed to infected dogs, their urine, blood, milk, or discharges. Keep sick dogs away from other dogs to avoid spreading the disease. Carefully screen dogs that are being introduced into a breeding program to control transmission. A new dog introduced to a kennel should be isolated for one



Brittmoore Animal Hospital
1236 Brittmoore Rd.
Houston, TX 77043
713-468-8253 Fax 713-468-8253
repro.bah@gmail.com

month. Two Brucella tests two to three months apart should be adequate to confirm negativity (it takes 8-12 weeks from infection for tests to turn positive). If an infection is detected in a kennel, the entire kennel population should be evaluated. Active stud dogs should be tested every 6 months.

How can I protect myself from canine brucellosis?

Wear protective clothing, gloves and masks when handling reproductive tissues. Always wash your hands after touching animals.

All dogs breeding dogs should have a brucellosis test!

If you are planning to breed your dog, test your dog and insist that the owner of your dog's mate produce results of a recent test for your inspection.

When a female dog aborts a pregnancy because of Brucella infection, she continues to secrete fluids packed with Brucella bacteria for four to six weeks.

Treatment

The infected dog must be removed from the breeding program (spayed, neutered, or euthanized) and immediately isolated from any animals to be used for breeding. Ideally the dog would be permanently isolated from all other dogs so as not to transmit the infection at all. If your dog tests positive, talk to your veterinarian about the best plan of action for your family. The dog can remain as a pet but probably should not be sold due to potential health risks. For pet dogs, a course of antibiotics can be given but since the bacterium is so good at hiding inside the host's cells, you can never assume it is ever truly gone. Some people keep their dogs on tetracycline for life. Dogs do recover from this infection without treatment, but it can take up to 5 years. Naturally recovered dogs cannot be reinfected; antibiotic-treated dogs can be reinfected.