

For Dog Owners / Shelter Staff



Brucella canis Fact Sheet

Brucella canis is a bacteria that causes **canine brucellosis**. This disease is endemic in areas with large populations of stray, sexually intact dogs.



Transmission

This bacteria is spread through **direct contact with infected bodily fluids** like vaginal discharge, semen, birthing fluids, urine, feces, blood, saliva, and nasal secretions. For dogs, this most often happens during breeding, during pregnancy, or ingestion of these fluids. For people, **transmission can occur if these materials contact the mouth, eyes, or scratches or wounds**.

Typically, there is low risk of infection for pet owners, and **dog breeders, shelter, and veterinary staff** face **increased risk** due to exposure to canine bodily fluids.

Symptoms

Many dogs with *B. canis* are asymptomatic. Symptoms include:

- Reproductive abnormalities (abortion, stillbirth, infertility)
- Genital abnormalities (enlarged testicles or scrotum)
- Inflammation of the vertebrae (discospondylitis)
- Enlarged lymph nodes
- Unexplained lameness or pain
- Reddening of the eye
- Lethargy
- Decreased appetite

High-Risk Dog Populations

From a population with a high number of stray dogs

New intake at a shelter of a mature, intact dog with no testing history

Dogs with known exposure to +*B. canis* dog

Newborn dogs not tested prior to breeding

Sexually intact dogs

Dogs with symptoms that match canine brucellosis with no other explanation

How can I prevent my dog from getting brucellosis?

Be aware of the symptoms to watch for, and contact your veterinarian if you suspect infection. Do not allow your dog to have contact with *+B. canis* dogs. Consider pre-breeding soundness exams and brucellosis screening tests with a veterinarian for intact animals prior to breeding.

What should I do if I think my dog has brucellosis?

Contact your veterinarian immediately. Isolate the dog if possible until brucellosis is ruled out.

What should I do if my dog tests positive?

- Dogs infected with *B. canis* should be spayed or neutered and should not breed or have contact with breeding dogs.
- Avoid contact with the dog's bodily fluids. Wear gloves when handling the animals and cleaning/disinfecting areas of your house where your dog has been when you isolate them as a precaution in case they are positive.
- Restrict the dog's interaction with immunocompromised people and children.
- Limit the dog's contact to as few people and dogs as possible.
- You should disclose the diagnosis should you switch owners, veterinarians, or move states.

For breeding kennels: If a dog tests positive, they should be isolated and rechecked after 30-60 days using the same test and laboratory. If still positive, additional confirmatory testing is needed.

I work at a dog shelter/rescue. What should I do if a dog at our facility tests positive?

- *B. Canis* is not reportable in animals in Tennessee, however, you may notify TDA or TDH if there is a human concern.
- Shelter/rescue dogs that test positive for *B. canis* are recommended to be euthanized due to no definitive treatment and zoonotic risk to humans.
- The alternative to euthanasia is to hold, isolate, and retest after 30-60 days.
- Dogs **should not** be placed in **foster care or adopted**.
- The *B. canis* bacterium can survive in the environment for long periods of time, therefore, precautions should be taken to **properly decontaminate** an area with an infected dog. Wear personal protective equipment for cleanup and handling animals.
 - Contaminated dust and dirt, water, feces, clothing, and other inanimate objects can pose transmission risk for a prolonged period.

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