

Brucella canis FAQ sheet for owners.

What is Brucella canis?

Brucella canis (or B. canis) is a type of bacterial species which causes an infection known as brucellosis. B. canis can be transmitted from dogs to humans. In the UK, it is mainly found in dogs imported from Eastern Europe, although dogs from other areas have been known to be infected. Human-to-human transmission of B. canis is extremely rare.

In dogs it can cause abortions and breeding problems, but it can also cause many other non-specific signs. Dogs infected with B.canis will not always show symptoms, but are still able to pass it on through various bodily fluids.

B.canis is a notifiable disease in the UK and as such all cases are notified to the local Health Protection team.

For further information please see the Government advice for owners:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/brucella-canis-information-for-the-public-and-dogowners/brucella-canis-information-for-the-public-and-dog-owners>

What is the risk to people?

The risk of most people catching B. canis is very low. Dog breeders, veterinary workers and owners of imported dogs may be at a higher risk and should take steps to reduce the risk of infection.

The risk to veterinary workers is greatest when dealing with breeding dogs (eg dealing with birth and caesaerian sections etc), dealing with ill dogs and carrying out procedures on dogs infected with B.Canis.

Why am I being told to test my dog?

We have a legal duty to reduce the risks to our staff's health and we are legally bound to produce risk assessments for various procedures that we carry out. The Government's own B.canis risk assessment has shown that veterinary workers are at greater risk of contracting B.canis. As part of our own and Government risk assessments, dogs imported from certain countries, or those in close confines with these imported dogs, carry greater risk to our staff and other members of the public on our premises.

When you register with us you will be asked if your dog is imported. A vet will carry out a risk assessment for this and then you will be told if you need to test. This will depend on if your dog has been imported from a country where B.canis is endemic.

What does the test involve?

The test is a simple blood test. The sample is sent to the APHA laboratory at Weybridge and a simple positive or negative result is obtained. At the time of writing the test costs around £57.

What if I do not want to test?

If you do not want to test your dog then we may not be able to register your dog to receive certain services at the practice. Whilst this may seem drastic, we have a duty to protect our staff and need to be fully informed of a dog's disease status before embarking on treatments and procedures which may harm our staff. We may need to refer you to a centre with specific isolation facilities for certain procedures.

My pet was tested prior to import, why am I being told to test again?

Not all tests for B.canis are as sensitive or accurate as the Government recommended test carried out at APHA, Weybridge. If the test that was carried out has not been performed at a Government recommended laboratory we will advise retesting.

In addition to this, the test for B.canis looks for antibodies to the bacteria in a dog's bloodstream. These antibodies can take up to 3 months to be produced after infection and so if a dog was tested just prior to export, you will be advised to test 3 months after export to ensure that infection had not taken place just prior to export.

I am thinking of importing a dog from abroad. What should I do?

We advise that you fully research the implications of importing a dog from abroad. There are several diseases that these dogs may carry that can affect their own health long term. Many of these diseases are also a risk to human health. The risk to human and canine health is much smaller in UK bred dogs and UK dog charities are receiving greater numbers of rescue dogs than ever before. Please consider rescuing one of the many dogs looking for a home that in the care of charities here in the UK.

Please see the European Scientific Counsel Companion Animal Parasites (ESCCAP) Guide:

https://www.esccap.org/uploads/docs/Osfaadir_0804_ESCCAP_Pet_Import_Advice_v6.pdf

Should you wish to import a dog, as a minimum, we would advise that the dog is tested for B.canis prior to export. This should be alongside other recommended tests such as Leishmania, Erlichia etc and dogs are legally required to be wormed before entering the UK.

If the dog is positive for B.canis it should not be imported. There is currently no legal requirement for dogs from certain countries to be tested for B.canis prior to export to the UK, but B.canis is a notifiable disease and so we **strongly recommend** that you insist on testing for it and other diseases.

If the dog is negative for B.canis a further test, three months after import to the UK, should be carried out (see above).

Please see the advice at the European Scientific Counsel Companion Animal Parasites (ESCCAP) for advice regarding other imported diseases in dogs:

https://www.esccap.org/uploads/docs/5y4xn3fr_0775_ESCCAP_Guideline_GL5_20221228_1p.pdf

I am thinking of breeding my dog abroad or with a dog from abroad, what should I do?

Before breeding any dog (whether by mating it or via artificial insemination), owners should be confident that neither the male nor female dog are infected. If there is doubt (for example they may have been imported from a country where canine brucellosis occurs or have previously mated with a

dog from such a country or are a contact of a confirmed case) they should be tested for infection. Dogs should not be bred if they test positive for brucellosis. If the dog has only recently been imported, or only recently bred with an imported dog, then testing on more than one occasion may be necessary to determine whether it is infected. A negative test result from testing at least 3 months after potentially becoming infected should mean the negative test result can be relied on for an adult dog, but a young dog may not test positive after being infected until it is an adult (if at all). If there remains any suspicion that a dog may be infected, the dog should not be bred from.

Further information:

<http://apha.defra.gov.uk/documents/surveillance/diseases/Canine-Brucellosis-Summary.pdf>

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