

Travel and Brucella canis

This applies to any pet having been imported from outside the UK, those who have lived outside the UK and those having had a history of travelling abroad. It could also apply to their offspring.

What is Brucella Canis?

It is a zoonotic infection that the dog can carry and which can pose a risk to both the owners and veterinary staff. It can be transmitted between dogs and it can be found in blood, urine, saliva and other tissues. The transmission risk to owners is considered low but there is an increasing number of dogs being diagnosed with Brucella in the UK, mostly from those who have travelled, or been in close contact with those who have travelled abroad.

A significant number of those dogs carrying it may not be showing any signs of carrying it.

What does this mean for your dog?

We are recommending a blood test for those animals who have been imported from outside the UK but are happy to carry out a blood test on your animal if you feel they are at an increased risk even if they haven't been imported. We send the blood to an external laboratory to get the result so we wouldn't carry out an elective/non urgent procedure until we had the result back. If your pet needed emergency treatment we would proceed as normal and take extra PPE precautions.

It can take 3 months after exposure to Brucella Canis for your dog to produce the antibodies we are looking for on the blood test so we wouldn't perform the test until they have been living in the UK for 3 months. If the dog is positive, it is considered infected for life.

If a dog tests positive, due to the human health risk euthanasia may be considered. As a minimum, neutering with pre and post antibiotics would need to take place and recommended to keep away from areas where other dogs frequent.

What are the clinical signs of Brucella canis in dogs?

As mentioned previously, not all dogs show signs but those that do may have some of the following:

- Neck or back pain with no history of trauma.
- Discharge from prepuce/vulva.
- Swelling of testicles/scrotum.
- Abortion. Uveitis.

How can a human become infected with Brucella and what are the symptoms?

The most common way would be through contact with birthing fluids from an infected animal as this contains very high quantities. It is possible however to be infected by infectious aerosols and through inhalation. It can survive outside the body in areas of high humidity and low temperatures for long periods of time.

The symptoms are generally mild and non specific including intermittent fever, loss of appetite, headaches, fatigue and joint pain. If not treated it can become chronic and have more serious symptoms. There is a risk of abortion in pregnant women exposed to Brucella canis.

Children, immunocompromised people and pregnant women are at a higher risk of contracting Brucella.