

Work With Your Veterinarian

Your veterinarian can help you navigate the many challenges with preventing, testing for, and controlling brucellosis, including biosecurity measures that can protect against the disease.

In general, if you have never tested for brucellosis at your kennel, it's best to test all dogs and then repeat testing every 4 weeks until all of them have had two consecutive negative tests. Also, continue to **test all new dogs before they enter your kennel**. This is the most important thing you can do to keep brucellosis out.



Your vet is your best ally when dealing with brucellosis and how to test for it!

USDA, Mike Tuck

Testing Process

Typically, your veterinarian will first perform a screening test such as the "rapid slide agglutination" test, AGID (agar gel immunodiffusion), or ELISA (enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay). A negative result on a screening test is usually very reliable. However, sometimes you will get a positive result from a dog who is not infected. So, it is important to confirm a positive result on a screening test with further testing, such as IFA (immunofluorescent assay), PCR (polymerase chain reaction), or blood culture, to determine if your dog is truly positive.

People can get brucellosis from dogs. If one of your dogs is infected, test the entire kennel. Remove infected dogs from your kennel as soon as possible: there is no cure for the disease in dogs.

Infected Kennels

If you find out one of your dogs is infected, work closely with your veterinarian to achieve a disease-free kennel. The best way to clear a kennel of brucellosis is to test all dogs in the kennel every 4 weeks until all of them have had two consecutive negative tests.

It is wise to remove any brucellosis-positive dogs from the kennel as soon as possible. There is no cure. Your State veterinarian or local and State public health officials can also give further guidance on handling brucellosis-positive dogs. Also, if you rehome a positive dog, you have a responsibility to spay or neuter the animal and inform the new owners of the risk.

Success also depends on practicing good biosecurity techniques throughout the process.



USDA, R. Anson Eaglin



Remember: it's up to you to protect your dogs from brucellosis.

- Know the facts about the disease.
- Watch for signs—but know that many dogs never show signs.
- Work with your veterinarian to test your dogs.
- Maintain good biosecurity and use safe cleaning techniques.

Brucellosis and Dog Kennels: What Breeders Need To Know

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Brucellosis and Your Dogs

As a dog breeder, you are responsible for the welfare of your dogs. This includes protecting their health and making sure they are free of contagious diseases like brucellosis.

Canine brucellosis can devastate your dogs' health and your kennel business. It causes major reproductive problems in dogs, including infertility, stillbirths, and early abortions. The disease can also lead to a host of other damaging health issues. If your dogs are infected with brucellosis, the earlier you find out and the quicker you act, the sooner you'll have a brucellosis-free kennel again.

Your efforts not only keep your animals safe, but also protect the families they will go to—and your reputation as a breeder.

Know the Facts

- Brucellosis is an infectious disease caused by bacteria (*Brucella*) that live mainly inside the cells of reproductive organs.
- There are various types of *Brucella*—found throughout the United States—that can infect dogs, pigs, cattle, deer, elk, sheep, goats, and other mammals.
- People can become infected by all of these types, including the one associated with dogs (called *Brucella canis*).
- Puppies born from infected mothers are often infected. This is a serious problem, since these animals may go into homes with children and others vulnerable to disease.

How It Spreads

Canine brucellosis can spread by direct contact with tissues or fluids from infected dogs. These include, among others: saliva, blood, urine, feces, vaginal discharge, semen, milk, or an aborted fetus. The disease can also spread in aerosolized form, such as when high-pressure sprayers are used to clean kennels or when contaminated dust and dirt is inhaled.

Puppies born from infected mothers are often infected. This poses a health threat for the families they go to, especially those with children.

- Because the bacteria live inside cells, there is **no cure** for brucellosis in dogs. Even after months of antibiotic treatment, dogs can still remain infected and spread the disease to other dogs and people.
- Prevention is key—practice good biosecurity and test all dogs in your kennel for brucellosis.
- Infected dogs should be removed from your kennel.
- Many dogs never show signs of the disease. Testing is often the only way to detect it.



Test all of your dogs for brucellosis. Many infected dogs show no signs—so testing may be the only way you'll know.

What To Watch For

Dogs with brucellosis may show any of the following signs:

- Abortions (most at 45–55 days of pregnancy)
- Puppies born dead or very weak
- Male infertility
- Swollen testicles and/or epididymitis
- Enlarged lymph nodes
- Lameness and lethargy

Be aware that these signs can mimic other diseases, and **many infected dogs show no signs**. As a result, it can be difficult to tell if a dog has brucellosis based on outward appearance alone. Testing done by a veterinarian is the best way to know if your animals are infected.

Human Health Risks

People can get brucellosis from dogs, but because the disease is hard to diagnose in humans, the true number of these cases is unknown. Those who work in close contact with dogs are most at risk for infection. Children, pregnant women, and those with compromised immune systems are also vulnerable. Symptoms may include flu-like signs (fever, headache, night sweats, chills, and generalized aches), recurring fevers, enlarged lymph nodes, arthritis, chronic

Biosecurity Tips

- Take care of brucellosis-negative dogs first, before attending to quarantined or brucellosis-suspect dogs. Wash your hands, and change clothing and footwear before attending to brucellosis-negative dogs.
- Use gloves, wear a face mask, and change boots when entering an area with infected dogs.
- Take special precautions when handling and removing fetuses, placenta, and fetal fluids, especially after an abortion or stillbirth.
- Clean and disinfect the kennel regularly. Avoid direct contact with urine or feces—consider using a degreaser or detergent to break down the organic film before using your disinfectant.
- Keep other dogs, people who own dogs, and wildlife (including pests) from entering your kennel.

fatigue, and swollen testicles. If you see any of these symptoms in yourself or others, contact a medical doctor.

For more information on brucellosis and human health concerns, go to www.cdc.gov/brucellosis/veterinarians/dogs.html.

What You Can Do: Prevention and Control

Unfortunately, there are no vaccines available for brucellosis. The best way to keep the disease out of your kennel is to:

- Test all new dogs before they enter your property. If that's not possible, quarantine new dog(s) in another building farthest away from your kennel until they can be tested.
- Never use untested dogs for breeding.
- Always practice good biosecurity at your facility.