

## How is brucellosis spread?

Dog-to-dog spread of brucellosis occurs most often through breeding and by contact with vaginal discharges, semen, birthing fluids, and urine. Contact with an infected dog's blood, milk, saliva, and feces are less common sources of infection.

Brucellosis can spread from dogs to people through contact with an infected dog's birthing fluids and vaginal discharge or infected puppies. This is why dog breeders and veterinarians are at higher risk. Rarely, brucellosis can be spread from family pets to people through contact with urine, saliva, and other bodily fluids from infected dogs.

## What are the symptoms?

In female dogs, the most common symptoms are aborted pregnancies, stillbirth, and inability to become pregnant. In males, the primary symptom is the inability to sire puppies. Both sexes may have swollen lymph glands, eye disease, and infections of the spine. However, most infected dogs appear normal and show no symptoms except for infertility. Female dogs can deliver healthy-appearing, but infected puppies.

Brucellosis in people normally causes a fever, headache, swollen lymph glands, night sweats, joint and muscle aches, fatigue, weight loss, and swollen liver and/or spleen. Some people may not have any symptoms.

For more information, contact:  
Mississippi Board of Animal Health,  
601-359-1170, [www.mbah.ms.gov](http://www.mbah.ms.gov).

*This information was adapted from  
the Canine Brucellosis and Foster-  
Based Rescue Dog Brochure by the  
Minnesota Department of Health*

*& created in conjunction with*



**MISSISSIPPI STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF  
VETERINARY MEDICINE



**Mississippi Board of Animal Health**  
P.O. Box 3889  
Jackson, MS 39207

**Phone: 601-359-1170**  
**Fax: 601-359-1177**  
**E-mail: [msstatevet@mdac.state.ms.us](mailto:msstatevet@mdac.state.ms.us)**

## **Canine Brucellosis: Information for Animal Shelters**



*Mississippi Board of Animal Health*

**James A. Watson, D.V.M.**

State Veterinarian

## What is canine brucellosis?

Canine brucellosis is a disease found in dogs caused by a type of bacteria called *Brucella canis*. Infected dogs can also spread the disease to people.



## Who gets brucellosis?

Dogs and people can become infected with brucellosis.

Dogs that have not been spayed or neutered (intact) are at higher risk of having brucellosis. This includes dogs in breeding programs and intact stray or owned free-roaming dogs.

In people, dog breeders and veterinarians are most at risk of infection because of their work with birthing puppies (whelping). People can also get brucellosis from their family pet, but this is much less common.

## How do you test for brucellosis?

Testing for brucellosis can be very difficult. Not all infected dogs will test positive, and dogs may require several tests to decide if they have brucellosis. Your veterinarian may recommend testing dogs that are sick or those which have been in contact with an infected dog.



## What can animal shelters do to reduce risk of canine brucellosis?

Animal shelters may have dogs infected with brucellosis since stray dogs are at greater risk, however, dogs only infect others through direct contact, usually during breeding. Ways to prevent spread in animal shelters include:

**Prevent Breeding** – House intact dogs alone or with other dogs of the same sex.

**Spay and Neuter** - Although spayed or neutered dogs can be infected, they are not as likely to spread the disease to other dogs or people.

**Monitor** – Monitor all dogs daily for signs of disease and promptly isolate any that are sick. Any items such as food bowls, beds, and leashes should not be used for healthy dogs until disinfected.

**Recognize Risks** - Dogs that have aborted or stillborn puppies may have brucellosis. Wear gloves and thoroughly disinfect whenever a litter is born and use extra caution if the mom or puppies are sick.

**Cleaning and Disinfection** - The bacteria which causes brucellosis can survive for months in dirty environments, but is readily killed by common disinfectants when applied to clean surfaces.

## Can brucellosis be treated?

In dogs brucellosis is very difficult to treat and relapses are common. Treatment includes spaying or neutering, giving antibiotics for several months, and frequent blood tests to monitor treatment progress. Treatment is typically not attempted for dogs in breeding kennels and when dogs can not be regularly tested and isolated from other dogs and people, potentially for the life of the dog.

Brucellosis is treatable in people. Treatment involves taking antibiotics daily for several months, regular monitoring, and may also involve surgery.