

FACT SHEET

Ehrlichia Canis

Western Australia has recently reported a small number of Ehrlichia canis (E. canis) infections in dogs (not greyhounds) in the Kimberley region. The WA state government is working with a private vet to manage the dogs, whilst putting in place biosecurity measures, conducting further surveillance and undertaking investigation as to the origin of the infections.

The government of the Northern Territory has also reported that E. canis infections, have been detected in a small number of dogs in Katherine and in a remote community in the Alice Springs region. Surveillance is underway to determine the origin and extent of Ehrlichiosis in the Northern Territory.

Until further notice participants are notified that before a currently registered racing greyhound can be transported from the Northern Territory for the purposes of entering a greyhound premises in NSW, GWIC will require a certificate from a registered veterinarian certifying that the greyhound has been blood tested for E. Canis infection and is certified as free from this disease. In addition, the veterinarian must certify that the greyhound has received preventative treatment for ticks and is free of ticks at the time of examination.

Below is information about the disease including symptoms and prevention.

What is Ehrlichia Canis (E. canis)?

E. Canis is a bacterial infection that is spread between canines (including domestic dogs and wild members of the canine family such as foxes) through brown-tick bites.

The bacteria infect white blood cells immune cells) leading to initial symptoms such as fever, discharge from the eyes and nose, poor appetite, lethargy and weight loss.

Apart from detections in imported dogs in Victoria in 2016 and 2018, this disease has not been previously diagnosed in Australia. The brown-tick is mostly associated with tropical and subtropical environments and has been identified in dogs in Western Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia. However, because the tick can complete its entire life cycle indoors, it has the potential to establish populations in colder climates.

How does this disease spread?

Dogs become infected with E. canis after being bitten by an infected tick. E. canis is transmitted primarily by the brown dog tick (Rhipicephalus sanguineus), which is widely distributed worldwide and is present in Australia.

Dogs do not transmit the disease to each other. The disease is maintained by a cycle of transmission between ticks and dogs.



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What are the symptoms of E. canis?

Initial symptoms of infection with E. canis include fever, discharge from the eyes and nose, poor appetite, lethargy and weight loss. The early stage of infection usually lasts for two to four weeks.

In the later stages of infection (50-100 days), dogs may show signs of bleeding disorders, pale gums, swollen lymph nodes (glands under the neck and other sites (around the body) and further weight loss.

What can I do to prevent transmission of E. canis?

Unfortunately, there is no vaccination to prevent the infection.

However, there are ways to help prevent the transmission of E.canis by:

- Maintain dogs on a tick control program – ask your vet for the most suitable product and application regime.
- Avoid taking dogs into tick-infested areas such as the bush where possible.
- Inspect dogs for ticks after being in tick-infested areas (especially around the neck, head, ears, armpits and belly) and carefully remove any ticks. Your vet can advise on the best methods of tick removal.

What should I do if I suspect my greyhound has E.canis?

Any suspicion for E. canis, particularly in greyhounds from interstate or after known tick-exposure, should be investigated by your veterinarian. E. canis can be diagnosed by a blood test. If treated quickly, symptoms will generally improve within a few days and without long term effects.

Other information

E. canis primarily causes disease in dogs; and infected dogs cannot pass the disease directly to humans. However, in rare cases, infected ticks may transmit E. canis to people. Infection usually causes flu-like symptoms in humans, ranging from mild body aches to severe fever, within a week or two of the tick bite.

E. canis is a notifiable disease. This means that it must be reported to agricultural authorities. Your veterinarian will be able to do this if E. canis in a greyhound is suspected or confirmed.

For more information about the E. canis, visit www.agric.wa.gov.au/ehrlichiosis .

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Commission's Veterinarian team on 13 GWIC (13 49 42) or email vets@gwic.nsw.gov.au .