

Canine Babesiosis

Particularly prevalent in France, babesiosis is a serious tick-borne protozoal disease caused by a parasite, *Babesia spp.*, which destroys red blood cells. In Europe, babesiosis is mainly caused by *Babesia canis* and it is rare in the UK. However, the disease is being diagnosed more frequently in travelling animals, since the introduction of the Pet Travel Scheme.

The disease is seen worldwide in dogs of all ages, although there seems to be a higher incidence in younger dogs. There is a seasonal variation with a higher frequency recorded in the warmer months. British dogs are particularly vulnerable as they have never encountered the disease and therefore have no resistance.

How is it spread?

It is transmitted through tick-bites to dogs, in which they infect and proliferate in red blood cells. Ticks will feed for up to three days before they transmit infection. Susceptible dogs can die within a couple of days of the clinical signs appearing.

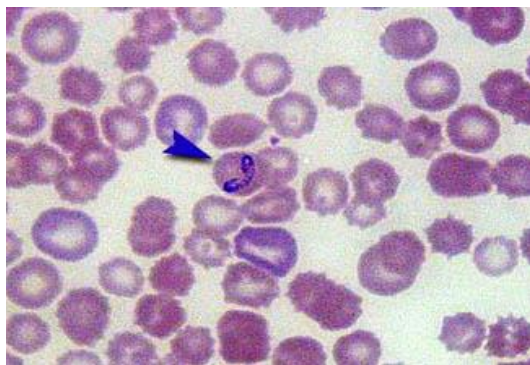
Signs and symptoms

Signs include fever, anaemia, lethargy, presence of ticks, high temperature, blood in the urine and jaundice.

Prevention and control

The primary goal in the treatment of babesiosis is to reverse the anaemia and eliminate or suppress the parasite. In complicated cases, additional intensive therapy is required, aimed at the particular organ affected. Blood transfusions in severely anaemic animals are not uncommon.

If holidaying abroad with your pet, it is vital to protect your dog from ticks and check its coat every day. If you can remove ticks, within a day of attachment, the disease can be prevented. Your veterinary surgeon will be able to advise you on suitable products to minimise the risks of ticks biting your dog.



Piroplasms of *Babesia canis* within red blood cells.



Jaundiced mucous membranes in a dog