

## NSW veterinarians urged to be aware of *Ehrlichia canis*

*NSW Department of Primary Industries is urging veterinarians to be aware of Ehrlichia canis as a potential diagnosis for dogs that are brought into NSW from the Northern Territory or Western Australia.*

***E. canis* infection is nationally notifiable. If you suspect the presence of this disease in any dog in NSW, you must report it to the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888.**

*Ehrlichia canis* (*E. canis*) is an obligate intracellular rickettsia-like bacterium transmitted by the brown dog tick (*Rhipicephalus sanguineus*), which causes a severe and potentially life-threatening disease of dogs called *canine monocytic ehrlichiosis* (CME) or *Ehrlichiosis*.

Since May 2020, infected dogs have been found throughout the Northern Territory (NT) and in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions of northern Western Australia (WA). Ticks carrying *E. canis* were also recently detected in the north of South Australia (SA).

The risk of introducing *E. canis* into NSW is higher when people move dogs from the NT or WA. Veterinarians and dog owners should always check the health condition and origin of a dog when brought into NSW including from dog adoption agencies.

*E. canis* has not been detected in dogs born in NSW but several dogs brought into the state from NT were diagnosed as positive to *E. canis* and are receiving veterinary treatment. The disease can't be passed directly between dogs, but it is important dogs are on tick prevention programs to ensure the risk of spread is low.

NSW DPI has undertaken an active surveillance program in dogs and ticks including testing historical canine blood samples collected in Northwest NSW between 2016 and 2018. There is no evidence *E. canis* is currently established in NSW.

Private veterinarians who are identifying and testing dogs with clinical signs consistent with *E. canis* are providing vital information to inform the presence of the disease in NSW. NSW DPI provides technical advice and information is available on submission of samples and the notification process on the DPI website.

### **Veterinary advice to dog owners**

Veterinarians in NSW can help minimise the risk of *E. canis* becoming established in NSW by being aware of the epidemiology and clinical signs of *E. canis*, and advising dog owners to:

- maintain an effective tick prevention and control program
- avoid taking their dog into tick-infested areas and regularly inspect their dog for ticks
- keep at-risk pets (such as those travelling to the NT, WA or the northern part of SA) on tick prevention that kills ticks before they attach
- ask questions about the origin and disease status of their dog if they are adopting a pet, and
- have their animal tested for *E. canis* if they are seeking to adopt dogs from the NT or WA.

Together the actions of private and government veterinarians of all states and territories will minimise the risk of infected dogs being moved into NSW.

The latest information and updates on *E. canis* can be found on the [NSW DPI website](#). Updates will also be shared on the [NSW DPI Biosecurity Facebook](#) page and the [NSW DPI Twitter feed](#), and can be shared with dog owners who have signed up to your social channels.

## Advice to owners re movement of dogs

To minimise the risk of spreading *E. canis*, owners moving their dogs from active disease locations into NSW are advised to:

- assess their dog's health and history before moving
- seek veterinary advice before entering NSW if their dog has not been on a tick prevention program, is unwell, or if the owner is unsure what actions to take
- have a veterinarian test their dog for disease before entering NSW to help ensure only healthy dogs are moved and *E. canis* is not introduced, and
- people who plan to move or adopt dogs from interstate should always check where animals are from, what tick prevention they have been on, and their health status.

## Testing for *E. canis*

NSW veterinarians should submit whole and clotted blood, and tick samples for testing where ehrlichiosis may be a differential diagnosis in dogs. Samples will be tested at no charge to the submitting veterinarian.

More information on submitting samples is available on [NSW DPI's Website](#).

## More information

NSW DPI will be reaching out to dog owners, veterinarians and dog adoption agencies to provide the latest *E. canis* information and the best ways to prevent spread into NSW

---

Reference number DOC21/74250

© State of New South Wales through Regional NSW 2021. The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (April 2021). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Regional NSW or the user's independent adviser.