



Australian Government



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Ehrlichiosis in your dog can be fatal

The best protection is through tick control



What is ehrlichiosis?

Canine ehrlichiosis is a disease of dogs caused by infection with a bacterium called *Ehrlichia canis*. The bacterium is carried by the brown dog tick.

In Australia, dogs can be infected with *E. canis* after being bitten by an infected brown dog tick—the disease does not transfer directly between dogs.

E. canis occurs worldwide, particularly in tropical and subtropical regions. Ehrlichiosis was first detected in Australia in May 2020. Since then, the disease has been diagnosed in the northern regions of Western Australia and South Australia, all of the Northern Territory and north-western Queensland.

What happens when a dog is infected?

Some dogs become unwell 1-3 weeks after being bitten by an infected tick. This is called an **acute infection** and needs veterinary treatment. There is a high rate of severe illness and death during the acute phase of illness, especially in Australia where the dog population has no previous exposure to the disease.

Other dogs may be infected but show no signs of the disease, which is known as subclinical infection, meaning it is a hidden infection. Infected dogs may clear the bacteria from the bloodstream, or they may become subclinical carriers of the bacteria in the spleen and bone marrow, with no signs of illness for months or years. Subclinical carriers may develop another form of the disease, known as chronic ehrlichiosis, which tends to be severe and is often untreatable, however veterinary advice should still be sought as supportive therapy may be available.

How do I protect my dog from infection?

There is no vaccine available for ehrlichiosis which is why prevention through regular tick treatment is the best form of defence against the disease.

- Use a registered tick product on your dog that both kills and repels ticks.
- Check regularly for attached ticks and keep long or fluffy coats clipped short so that you can find ticks more easily.
- Where possible, avoid tick infested areas.
- Have any tick infestations in your house or yard managed by a pest controller
- Contact your vet if your dog is showing signs of ehrlichiosis such as fever, lethargy, and appetite loss.