

# Swine Brucellosis

## What is Swine Brucellosis?

Swine Brucellosis is a serious disease affecting pigs, dogs and humans caused by the bacteria *Brucella suis*. The disease is common in areas with high numbers of feral pigs.

*Brucella suis* in pigs causes infections that can cause abortion, infertility, lameness, swollen testicles and pain in the spine. Humans can contract the disease directly from pigs, and potentially through contact with dogs that have been infected by pigs.



## Where is it?

Brucellosis used to be seen mainly in Queensland, however, in recent months, movement of feral pig populations has led to the diagnosis of several cases in North Western New South Wales. Cases in dogs have recently been diagnosed in Moree, Gunnedah, Bingara and Tamworth.

## How is it spread?

Swine Brucellosis is spread between pigs through exposure to contaminated body fluids. This is commonly through pigs eating aborted fetuses and fluids discharged during abortions. Boars may infect sows via contaminated semen during mating. Infection may also occur through the eyes, nose and mouth or through open skin wounds.

Most importantly, Swine Brucellosis is known to be able to infect other species including dogs, foxes and humans.



## Are you and your dogs at risk?

*Brucella suis* typically infects people who have had a lot of contact with infected pigs.

The main groups of people at risk include:

- Feral pig hunters
- Veterinarians
- Farm workers
- Abattoir workers.

Dogs most commonly affected are those used in pig hunting, or who are allowed to eat feral pig carcasses.

## How is Swine Brucellosis spread to people?

The bacteria are present in urine, blood, saliva and reproductive fluids of infected pigs and dogs. The bacteria gains entry to humans through uncovered cuts and grazes, the eyes, mouth and nose. This contact is most likely to occur during butchering of pig carcasses or their disposal.

There is also a potential risk for humans to be infected through contact with infected dogs.

## How can I prevent infection?

- Avoid contact with infected dogs
- Cover all skin cuts with waterproof dressings or wear latex gloves when handling pigs
- Ensure there is good lighting when handling pig carcasses
- Use care when using knives to gut pigs
- Thoroughly wash hands and arms in soapy water after handling pigs or their carcasses
- Take special care when disposing of aborted material and female reproductive organs
- **Don't feed feral pig carcasses to dogs**

## Who should I contact?

If your dog displays any of the signs listed overleaf, please contact your local veterinarian as soon as possible.

If you or a family member experience any of the clinical signs related to humans, please contact your doctor or go to the nearest hospital.

If you encounter a feral pig that you suspect is infected with Swine Brucellosis, please contact your Local Land Services or DPI Office.



## What are the clinical signs in dogs?

- Fever
- Vomiting
- Back pain
- Blood in urine
- Lethargy
- Swollen testicles
- Reproductive problems in bitches

It is important to note that dogs may not display all or any of these clinical signs. Infected dogs have presented bright and alert with the only abnormality being markedly enlarged testicles.



Further Information can be found in the  
DPI Factsheet available at;

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/animal/humans/brucellosis-in-dogs>

## What are the clinical signs in people?

- Fever
- Sweating
- Loss of appetite
- Back pain
- Head aches
- Abortion in pregnant women

Further information is available from  
NSW Health:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Factsheets/brucellosis.pdf>

## How do dogs become infected?

The dogs that tend to become infected with *B. suis* are those involved in feral pig hunting. Contact with the blood of infected pigs, or feeding on carcasses or aborted materials is a common cause of infection.

Infection can also be spread between dogs (via blood, milk and reproductive materials) and from bitches to puppies during pregnancy and lactation.

Treatment for Swine Brucellosis in dogs is prolonged, expensive and often ineffective. It is currently recommended that all dogs confirmed to be infected with *B. suis* be euthanized due to the potential for infection of humans.