

## Client Information on Babesiosis in Dogs

A small number of cases of Babesia have been identified near Harlow. The risks of dogs picking up this disease in this area are extremely small. This is because the tick that carries this parasite is rare in this area. It is mostly found in south west England and Wales and occurs where there are cattle, sheep, horses, pigs, foxes, hares and hedgehogs.

### **What is Babesiosis**

Babesiosis is an infection caused by the single celled parasite Babesia, carried by a rare species of tick (*Demacantor Reticlatus*). The tick needs to attach itself to your dog for 24-48 hours for the tick to successfully transmit the disease. The infection damages the red blood cells of the dog, which then goes on to cause the body's immune cells to then attack the red blood cells. This leads to anaemia which, without treatment can be life threatening.

### **What are the symptoms of Babesiosis?**

The symptoms of babesiosis does vary from dog to dog but the main signs are lethargy, weakness, pale gums, jaundice, red/brown urine and fever. Diagnosis for this disease is made by examining the patient's blood under the microscope.

### **How is Babesiosis treated?**

Babesiosis in dogs is usually successfully treated. Treatment is focused on killing the parasite and preventing the body from attacking and destroying more red blood cells. Dogs usually need to be hospitalised for supportive care. If left untreated this disease may be fatal.

### **How can Babesiosis be prevented?**

There are no vaccinations available in the UK. The best way to prevent this disease is to be vigilant, check your dog after a walk for any ticks that have attached themselves and remove them as soon as possible. Particular care needs to be given to dogs travelling outside of the UK. There are many tick prevention products available please speak to us if you are worried or concerned your dog maybe at risk.

There are no reported cases of babesiosis in cats in the UK.