



**FOREST**  
Veterinary Centre

[www.forestvets.com](http://www.forestvets.com)

## CLIENT INFORMATION SHEET

### Babesiosis in Dogs

At Forest Veterinary Centre we have recently diagnosed and treated two local dogs with Babesiosis, a disease more commonly seen in other European countries.

#### What is Babesiosis?

Babesiosis in dogs is an infection caused by the single-celled parasite Babesia. This parasite infects red blood cells, both directly damaging the cells but also causing the body's own immune cells to attack red blood cells. This leads to an anaemia which can be life threatening.

#### How is it transmitted?

The main mode of transmission is through tick bites. A tick typically needs to be attached to a dog for 24-48 hours to successfully transmit the disease. Until recently, ticks in the UK were very unlikely to be carrying Babesia, however, with the increase in pet travel since passports were introduced the risks may now be higher.

#### What are the symptoms of Babesiosis?

The symptoms of infection relate to the destruction of red blood cells. They can be non-specific and vary widely from dog to dog. The main symptoms are: lethargy, weakness, pale gums, jaundice, red/brown urine and fever. Diagnosis is made by examining the blood under the microscope or using specialised genetic tests to detect the parasite's presence.

#### How can it be treated?

Treatment is focused on killing the parasite and stopping the body's immune system from destroying more red blood cells. Dogs may need to be hospitalised to give them supportive care and close monitoring and in severe cases, may need blood transfusions. It can be fatal if left untreated.

#### How can it be prevented?

There are no vaccines for Babesia available in the UK. Prevention is based on routine use of anti-tick medication and being vigilant and removing ticks from the coat as soon as they are seen. Please speak to your vet regarding our current recommendations for tick prevention. Particular care should be taken if your pet is travelling outside the UK, however both of the cases that have been seen at Forest Veterinary Centre involved dogs that had not travelled, suggesting ticks in the UK were responsible for transmitting the disease.

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