

## Notice to Participants – *Ehrlichia canis* detected in dogs in areas of Northern Australia

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The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) in Western Australia has recently reported a small number of *Ehrlichia canis* (*E. canis*) infections in dogs (not greyhounds) in the Kimberley region (Halls Creek and Kununurra areas). The WA state government is working with a private vet to manage the dogs, whilst putting in place biosecurity measures, conducting further surveillance and undertaking investigation as to the origin of the infections.

Conditions on dog movements into and out of the Kimberley region have been put in place by DPIRD to reduce the potential for spread of the disease whilst further disease surveillance occurs.

The government of the Northern Territory has also reported that *E. canis* infections, have been detected in a small number of dogs in Katherine and in a remote community in the Alice Springs region. Surveillance is underway to determine the origin and extent of *Ehrlichiosis* in the Northern Territory.

**Until further notice participants are notified that before a currently registered racing greyhound can be transported from the Northern Territory for the purposes of entering a greyhound racing establishment in Western Australia, RWWA will require a certificate from a registered veterinarian certifying that the greyhound has been blood tested for *E. Canis* infection and is certified as free from this disease. In addition the veterinarian must certify that the greyhound has received preventative treatment for ticks and is free of ticks at the time of examination.**

### Ehrlichia Canis (Ehrlichiosis)

*E. canis* is a bacterial infection that is spread between canines (including domestic dogs and wild members of the canine family such as foxes) through brown tick bites. Apart from detections in imported dogs this disease has not been previously diagnosed in Australia. The brown tick is mostly associated with tropical and subtropical environments and is widely distributed throughout Australia. As the tick can complete its entire life cycle indoors it has the potential to establish populations in colder climates also. Dogs do not transmit the disease to each other. The disease is maintained by a cycle of transmission between ticks and dogs.

Initial symptoms of infection with *E. Canis* include fever, discharge from the eyes and nose, poor appetite, lethargy and weight loss. The early stage of infection usually lasts for two to four weeks. In the later stages of infection (50-100 days), dogs may show signs of bleeding disorders, pale gums, swollen lymph nodes (glands under the neck and other sites around the body) and further weight loss.

Any suspicion for *E. canis*, particularly in greyhounds from Northern Australian areas or after known tick-exposure, should be investigated by your veterinarian. *E. canis* can be diagnosed by a blood test. If treated quickly, symptoms will generally improve within a few days and without long term effects. Because there is no vaccination, tick control is the most effective means of preventing the disease.

*E. canis* primarily causes disease in dogs; and infected dogs cannot pass the disease directly to humans. However, in rare cases, infected ticks may transmit *E. canis* to people. Infection usually causes flu-like symptoms in humans, ranging from mild body aches to severe fever, within a week or two of the tick bite.

***E. canis* is a notifiable disease. This means that it must be reported to DPIRD. Your veterinarian will be able to do this if *E. canis* in a greyhound is suspected or confirmed.**

Further information: <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/ehrlichiosis>

If you have any questions or concerns, speak to your veterinarian or contact [vets@rwwa.com.au](mailto:vets@rwwa.com.au)