

Ehrlichiosis disease

Stakeholder key messages

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1. Introduction

Please feel free to incorporate the below key messages into your newsletter content or messages to stakeholders about how to support protecting Northern Territory (NT) dogs from an outbreak of ehrlichiosis.

We have messages to suit the general community as well as tailored to individuals or groups integrated with specific dog activities, such as boarding kennels, greyhound racing, dog clubs and travellers with dogs.

Consistent messaging across the community helps to protect Territory dogs from ehrlichiosis.

2. Stakeholder key messages

2.1. Community (all audiences)

- The disease ehrlichiosis, an exotic tick-borne dog disease, has been confirmed in a small number of dogs in Katherine and, a remote community west of Alice Springs.
- Ehrlichiosis was detected in Western Australia's Kimberly region in May and is caused by a tick-borne bacteria called *Ehrlichia canis*.
- The bacteria is transmitted to dogs by the brown dog tick and in dogs can cause fever, lethargy, loss of appetite, weight loss, cloudy or sore eyes, pain and stiffness, bleeding disorders such as nosebleeds, and, if not properly treated, death.
- The disease can resemble other conditions in dogs with similar signs, including tick-borne diseases such as anaplasmosis and babesiosis, which are already present in the Northern Territory so it's vital to seek veterinary advice and treatment if you suspect your dog is showing signs of ehrlichiosis.
- Ehrlichiosis in dogs requires immediate veterinary treatment for the best chance of recovery.
- The disease cannot be directly passed from infected dogs to humans.
- In extremely rare cases, ticks infected with *Ehrlichia canis* may infect people. However human ehrlichiosis is almost always caused by species other than *Ehrlichia canis* and these species have not yet been found in Australia.
- For information on human health implications associated with ticks, as well as prevention, removal and first aid advice visit the [Department of Health website](#).
- Once the disease is established in the brown dog tick population it is very difficult to control, particularly in tropical and subtropical regions.
- Prevention is the best protection for dogs as vaccinations are not presently available.
- All dog owners are strongly encouraged to have their dogs on a tick control program, regularly check their dogs for ticks, and be on the lookout for signs of the disease.
- To protect your dog from ehrlichiosis:
 - have your dogs on a tick control program
 - ensure any tick infestations in the house yard are managed by a pest controller
 - avoid taking your dogs into tick-infested areas
 - take particular care when bush-walking with your dog

- inspect your dogs daily for ticks, especially if they have been in a tick-infested areas. Inspect your dogs daily for ticks, especially if they have been in a tick-infested areas. Run your fingers through your pet's coat over their skin, feeling for abnormal bumps. Pay particular attention to the head and neck, chest, between their toes and around their mouths and gums.
- contact your vet if you find ticks on your dog and recognise any signs of ehrlichiosis.
- be on the lookout for signs of ehrlichiosis, such as fever, lethargy and appetite loss.
- Ehrlichiosis in dogs requires immediate veterinary treatment for the best chance of recovery.
- Once the disease is established in the brown dog tick population it is very difficult to control, particularly in tropical and subtropical regions.
- Prevention is the best protection for dogs as vaccinations are not presently available.
- All dog owners are strongly encouraged to have their dogs on a tick control program, regularly check their dogs for ticks, and be on the lookout for signs of the disease.
- All NT veterinarians are being contacted to advise of the detection in the Northern Territory and provided with information to ensure any dogs showing clinical signs consistent with the disease are sampled and tested for *Ehrlichia canis* as a precautionary measure.
- Ehrlichiosis is a nationally notifiable disease. If you suspect your dog is showing signs of the disease you must report it to your local veterinarian or the national Emergency Animal Disease Watch hotline on 1800 675 888.
- The Northern Territory Government has launched a community awareness campaign and is co-ordinating surveillance with NT veterinarians, which includes free diagnostic testing for *Ehrlichia canis* in dogs at Berrimah Veterinary Laboratories.

2.2. Boarding kennels

- Dog owners should check with your local boarding kennel on disease prevention requirements, such as tick, flea, worm and mandatory vaccinations, for dog admissions to ensure strong disease prevention measures are in place.
- Animals with known or suspected infectious diseases should not be admitted for boarding.

2.3. Greyhound activities

- Due to the mobile nature of greyhounds, owners are required to advise the controlling body of any suspected infectious disease and take immediate steps to isolate the suspected greyhound until the infection is formally diagnosed by a veterinary practitioner.
- Greyhounds that are suspected or have been diagnosed as having an infectious disease must be isolated in facilities either within the greyhound premises or at a veterinary premises.
- Greyhound owners must act quickly to prevent the spread of disease and protect the wellbeing of greyhounds, seeking appropriate veterinary care.
- You must not allow greyhounds with suspected or confirmed infectious diseases race, be overworked or offered for sale.
- If you are a greyhound owner, you must take responsibility for your greyhound's welfare and make sure trainers and others follow welfare rules.
- You must consult a vet if your greyhound has an unexplained illness or dies.

- The greyhound racing industry, its promoters and regulators are responsible for the welfare of greyhound racing dogs.

2.4. Dog clubs, shows and events

- The transmission of infectious disease are increased when dogs are brought together in a shared environment.
- Only dogs without suspected or confirmed infectious diseases should participate in group settings.
- Infections disease prevention and control protocols should be developed to reduce infectious disease transmission in canine group settings.
- Disease prevention requirements for involvement in group settings, such as tick, flea, worm and mandatory vaccinations should be clearly articulated to dog owners prior to their arrival, and these requirements should be uniformly enforced.

2.5. Travellers

- Traveling with dogs can result in exposure to various infectious diseases they wouldn't normally encounter.
- If you travel with your pet, part of your pre-travel checklist should be an appointment with your veterinarian to assess disease prevention requirements such as vaccination, worming, tick and flea control, heartworm preventive.
- If your pet gets sick and has travelled, make sure your veterinarian knows where you went and when.
- Avoid contact with other dogs when making stops along your journey, such as at fuel stations, truck stops or caravan parks to avoid transmission of infectious diseases.

3. Suggest newsletter articles

3.1. Ehrlichiosis awareness

Title:

Tick-borne dog disease ehrlichiosis confirmed in Northern Territory

Body content:

The disease ehrlichiosis, an exotic tick-borne dog disease, has been confirmed in a small number of dogs in Katherine and, a remote community west of Alice Springs. Ehrlichiosis was also previously detected in Western Australia's Kimberly region during May 2020.

Caused by a tick-borne bacteria, ehrlichiosis requires veterinary treatment and early treatment provides the best chance of recovery.

The disease cannot be directly passed from infected dogs to humans. In extremely rare cases, ticks infected with *Ehrlichia canis* may infect people. However human ehrlichiosis is almost always caused by species other than *Ehrlichia canis* and these species have not yet been found in Australia.

Once the disease is in the brown dog tick population it's very difficult to control, particularly in tropical and subtropical regions.

Symptoms can include:

- fever

- lethargy
- loss of appetite
- weight loss
- cloudy or sore eyes
- pain and stiffness
- bleeding disorders such as nosebleeds.

It is important to seek veterinary advice and treatment, as the disease can resemble other conditions with similar signs in dogs, including tick-borne diseases such as anaplasmosis and babesiosis, which are already present in the Northern Territory (NT) and, if not properly treated can result in death.

To protect your dog from ehrlichiosis:

- have your dogs on a tick prevention program
- ensure any tick infestations in the house yard are managed by a pest controller
- avoid taking your dogs into tick-infested areas
- take particular care when bush-walking with your dog
- inspect your dogs daily for ticks, especially if they have been in a tick-infested areas. Run your fingers through your pet's coat over their skin, feeling for abnormal bumps. Pay particular attention to the head, neck and ears, chest, between their toes and around their mouths and gums.
- contact your veterinarian if you find ticks on your dog and are concerned.
- be on the lookout for signs of ehrlichiosis, such as fever, lethargy and appetite loss.

The Northern Territory Government has launched a community awareness campaign and is working with Territory veterinarians to co-ordinate surveillance for the disease in NT dogs. A detailed surveillance plan is also being prepared, which includes free diagnostic testing for the bacteria *Ehrlichia canis* in dogs at Berrimah Veterinary Laboratories.

If you suspect your dog is showing signs of the disease, report it to your local vet or the national Emergency Animal Disease Watch hotline 1800 675 888.

For more information visit nt.gov.au/ehrlichiosis

3.2. Ehrlichiosis protection

Title:

Protect your dog from ehrlichiosis

Body content:

The disease ehrlichiosis, an exotic tick-borne dog disease, has been confirmed in a small number of dogs in Katherine and, a remote community west of Alice Springs, as well as the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

The exotic disease of dogs has not been previously detected in Australia and is caused by a tick-borne bacteria called *Ehrlichia canis*.

Symptoms can include:

- fever
- lethargy
- loss of appetite
- weight loss
- cloudy or sore eyes

- pain and stiffness
- bleeding disorders such as nosebleeds.

It is important to seek veterinary advice and treatment, as the disease can resemble other conditions in dogs with similar signs, including tick-borne diseases such as anaplasmosis and babesiosis, which are already present in the Northern Territory (NT) and, if not properly treated can result in death.

Prevention is the best protection for dogs as vaccinations are not presently available. To protect your dog from ehrlichiosis:

- have your dogs on a tick prevention program
- ensure any tick infestations in the house yard are managed by a pest controller
- avoid taking your dogs into tick-infested areas
- take particular care when bush-walking with your dog
- inspect your dogs daily for ticks, especially if they have been in a tick-infested areas. Run your fingers through your pet's coat over their skin, feeling for abnormal bumps. Pay particular attention to the head, neck and ears, chest, between their toes and around their mouths and gums.
- contact your veterinarian if you find ticks on your dog and are concerned.
- be on the lookout for signs of ehrlichiosis, such as fever, lethargy and appetite loss.

If you suspect your dog is showing signs of the disease, report it to your local vet or the national Emergency Animal Disease Watch hotline 1800 675 888.

For more information visit nt.gov.au/ehrlichiosis

3.3. Ehrlichiosis in the community

Title: Heading out this weekend with your dog?

Body content:

Protect your dog from ehrlichiosis, an exotic tick-borne dog disease confirmed in the Northern Territory, when heading out and about with your furry friend this weekend.

The spread of infectious disease are increased when dogs are brought together in shared environments such as dog clubs, obedience schools and dog parks. Make sure your dog's tick, flea, worm and vaccinations are up to date to reduce disease transmission.

Inspect your dog's daily for ticks, especially if they have been in a tick-infested areas. Run your fingers through your pet's coat over their skin, feeling for abnormal bumps. Pay particular attention to the head and neck, chest, between their toes and around their mouths and gums.

If you find ticks on your dog, consult your vet for appropriate tick control and seek veterinary attention immediately if your pet is showing ehrlichiosis signs such as fever, lethargy and weight loss.

If you suspect your dog is showing signs of the disease, report it to your local vet or the national Emergency Animal Disease Watch hotline 1800 675 888.

For more information visit nt.gov.au/ehrlichiosis

3.4. Travelling

Title: Considering a road-trip with your pooch as borders reopen?**Body content;**

Traveling with dogs can increase exposure to infectious diseases that dogs wouldn't normally encounter, such as ehrlichiosis, an exotic tick-borne dog disease confirmed in Katherine and, a remote community west of Alice Springs, as well as the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

Ehrlichiosis has not been previously detected in Australia, which is transmitted to dogs by the brown dog tick. Once the disease is in the tick population, it's very difficult to control.

Travel preparations to protect your pooch:

- Before hitting the road check in with your veterinarian to assess disease prevention requirements such as vaccination, worming, tick and flea control, heartworm preventive.
- Avoid contact with other dogs when making stops along your journey, such as at fuel stations, truck stops or caravan parks to avoid ehrlichiosis transmission between dogs by the brown dog tick.
- Keep an eye out for signs and symptoms such as fever, lethargy, blood disorders and weight loss.
- Check your dogs daily for ticks, especially if they have been in a tick-infested areas.

If your dog gets sick when travelling, make sure your veterinarian knows where you went and when.

It is important to seek veterinary advice and treatment, as the disease can resemble other conditions with similar signs in dogs, including tick-borne diseases such as anaplasmosis and babesiosis, which are already present in the Northern Territory (NT), and, if not properly treated can result in death.

If you suspect your dog is showing signs of the disease, report it to your local vet or the national Emergency Animal Disease Watch hotline 1800 675 888.

For more information visit nt.gov.au/ehrlichiosis

3.5. Dog boarding precautions

Title: Boarding your pooch while you explore the Territory?**Body content:**

Protect your dog from ehrlichiosis, an exotic tick-borne dog disease confirmed in Katherine and, a remote community west of Alice Springs, as well as the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

The spread of infectious diseases, such as ehrlichiosis which is spread by the brown dog tick, are increased when dogs are brought together in shared environments such as boarding accommodations.

Check with your local boarding kennel on mandatory disease prevention requirements for admissions to ensure strong disease prevention measures are in place and make sure your dog's tick, flea, worm and vaccinations are up to date.

It is important to seek veterinary advice and treatment, as the disease can resemble other conditions with similar signs in dogs, including tick-borne diseases such as anaplasmosis and babesiosis, which are already present in the Northern Territory (NT), and, if not properly treated can result in death.

Prevention is the best protection for dogs as vaccinations are not presently available. To protect your dog from ehrlichiosis:

- have your dogs on a tick prevention program

- ensure any tick infestations in the house yard are managed by a pest controller
- avoid taking your dogs into tick-infested areas
- take particular care when bush-walking with your dog
- inspect your dogs daily for ticks, especially if they have been in a tick-infested areas..
- contact your veterinarian if you find ticks on your dog and are concerned.
- be on the lookout for signs of ehrlichiosis, such as fever, lethargy and appetite loss.

Dogs with known or suspected infectious diseases should not be boarded.

If you suspect your dog is showing signs of the disease, report it to your local vet or the national Emergency Animal Disease Watch hotline 1800 675 888.

For more information visit nt.gov.au/ehrlichiosis

4. Suggested social media

4.1. Ehrlichiosis awareness

Title: Tick-borne dog disease ehrlichiosis confirmed in NT

Body content:

The disease ehrlichiosis, an exotic tick-borne dog disease, has been confirmed in a small number of dogs in Katherine and, a remote community west of Alice Springs as well as the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

All NT veterinarians have been contacted about the detection, to be on the lookout for symptoms and precautionary testing measures.

Make sure your dog is on a tick control program and if you suspect your dog is showing signs of the disease, report it to your local vet or the national Emergency Animal Disease Watch hotline 1800 675 888.

visit nt.gov.au/ehrlichiosis

4.2. Ehrlichiosis awareness and reporting

Title: Be on the lookout for ehrlichiosis in dogs

Body content:

Ehrlichiosis, an exotic tick-borne dog disease, confirmed in a small number of dogs in Katherine and, a remote community west of Alice Springs, as well as the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

The exotic disease is transmitted to dogs by the brown dog tick. Symptoms include fever, lethargy, loss of appetite, weight loss, cloudy or sore eyes, pain and stiffness, bleeding disorders such as nosebleeds, and, if not properly treated, death.

If you suspect your dog is showing signs of the disease, report it to your local vet or the national Emergency Animal Disease Watch hotline 1800 675 888.

visit nt.gov.au/ehrlichiosis

4.3. Ehrlichiosis protection

Title: Protect your dog from ehrlichiosis

Body content:

- Protect your dog from ehrlichiosis, an exotic tick-borne dog disease confirmed in a small number of dogs in the Northern Territory.

To prevent ehrlichiosis:

- have your dogs on a tick control program
- ensure any tick infestations in the house yard are managed by a pest controller
- avoid taking your dogs into tick-infested areas
- take particular care when bush-walking with your dog
- inspect your dogs daily for ticks, especially if they have been in a tick-infested areas.
- contact your vet if you find ticks on your dog and recognise any signs of ehrlichiosis.
- be on the lookout for signs of ehrlichiosis, such as fever, lethargy and appetite loss.

If you suspect your dog is showing signs of the disease, report it to your local vet or the national Emergency Animal Disease Watch hotline 1800 675 888.

visit nt.gov.au/ehrlichiosis

4.4. Ehrlichiosis action

Title: Ehrlichiosis, an exotic tick-borne dog disease

Body content:

Ehrlichiosis is an exotic tick-borne dog disease, confirmed in a small number of dogs in the Northern Territory. The disease is transmitted by the brown dog tick and, if not properly treated, can result in death.

If you find ticks on your dog, consult your vet for appropriate tick control and seek veterinary attention immediately if your pet is showing ehrlichiosis signs such as fever, lethargy and weight loss.

Early treatment is vital to ensure the best chance of recovery.

Prevention is the best protection for dogs as vaccinations are not presently available - ensure your dogs are on a tick prevention program.

visit nt.gov.au/ehrlichiosis

4.5. Dog clubs or gatherings

Title: Heading out this weekend with your dog?

Body content:

Protect your dog from ehrlichiosis, an exotic tick-borne dog disease confirmed in a small number of dogs in the Northern Territory.

The disease is transmitted by the brown dog tick and, if not properly treated, can result in death.

The spread of infectious disease are increased when dogs are brought together in shared environments. Make sure your dog's tick, flea, worm and vaccinations are up to date to reduce disease transmission.

If you find ticks on your dog, consult your vet for appropriate tick control and seek veterinary attention immediately if your pet is showing ehrlichiosis signs such as fever, lethargy and weight loss.

visit nt.gov.au/ehrlichiosis

4.6. Travelling

Title: Considering a road-trip with your pooch as borders reopen?

Body content;

Travelling with dogs can increase exposure to infectious diseases that dogs wouldn't normally encounter, such as ehrlichiosis, an exotic tick-borne dog disease confirmed in Katherine and, a remote community west of Alice Springs, as well as the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

Before hitting the road check in with your veterinarian to assess disease prevention requirements such as vaccination, worming, tick and flea control, heartworm preventive.

Avoid contact with other dogs when making stops along your journey, such as at fuel stations, truck stops or caravan parks to avoid ehrlichiosis transmission between dogs by the brown dog tick.

If your dog gets sick when travelling, make sure your veterinarian knows where you went and when.

If you find ticks on your dog, consult your vet for appropriate tick control and seek veterinary attention immediately if your pet is showing ehrlichiosis signs such as fever, lethargy and weight loss.

visit nt.gov.au/ehrlichiosis

4.7. Boarding

Title: Booking your pooch into board while you explore the Territory?

Body content:

Protect your dog from ehrlichiosis, an exotic tick-borne dog disease confirmed in Katherine and, a remote community west of Alice Springs, as well as the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

Make sure your dog's tick, flea, worm and vaccinations are up to date to reduce the transmission of diseases such as ehrlichiosis which is spread by the brown dog tick and, if not properly treated, can result in death.

Check with your local boarding kennel on mandatory disease prevention requirements for admissions to ensure strong disease prevention measures are in place. Dogs with known or suspected infectious diseases should not be boarded.

visit nt.gov.au/ehrlichiosis