

Babesia in dogs - implications for people

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Investigators looked at several tick-transmitted diseases including *Babesia*, in dogs, to help determine potential risks to humans. Hunting dogs, specifically, were tracked as they are exposed to ticks more often than pet dogs. And they are more likely to be outdoors for long periods in tick habitats and less likely to be groomed for ticks by their owner.

Furthermore, “A recent occupational study found that those who work with hunting dogs compared to those who work in high-risk tick environments, were 5.83 times more likely to report having found embedded ticks on their bodies,” [writes Mahachi](#).

The authors examined the incidence of Lyme disease, *ehrlichiosis*, *anaplasmosis*, and *Babesia* in hunting dogs. But they excluded dogs that were symptomatic with Lyme disease, *ehrlichiosis*, and *anaplasmosis*.

Study findings

They found, “Unlike *B. burgdorferi* and *Anaplasma spp.*, the highest number of seroprevalent dogs with *Babesia spp.* was in the Midwest (52.5%) and South (50%) and the lowest numbers in the West (32.6%), with high levels across all regions.”

The hunting dogs also had a high rate of co-infection with *Borrelia burgdorferi* and *Anaplasma spp.* The presence of co-infections, however, was not a surprise to investigators, given that past studies have found “up to 40% of patients with Lyme disease experienced concurrent babesiosis infections and 13% experienced concurrent *Anaplasma* infections.”

The authors also examined seropositivity results over three time periods, January – February, August and November. “Our results show that *Babesia spp.*, *Ba. gibsoni*, and *B. burgdorferi* seropositivity remained elevated across all three time points.”

“It is important for healthcare workers to take note of current region and regions veterinary patients and their owners may have visited when considering tick-borne disease diagnoses,” writes Mahachi.

Unfortunately, the surveillance of tick-borne diseases, such as *Babesia*, in dogs has been limited due to a lack of centralized federal surveillance or mandate.

But, the authors write, “given the close interaction between dogs and people, dogs can serve as an important sentinel species to help track vector-borne disease risks by monitoring trends of infection from tick-borne pathogens in dogs.”

Related Articles:

[Tracking ticks in West Virginia using man's best friend](#)

[Can service dogs help patients with Lyme disease and other chronic illnesses?](#)

[How do Lyme disease vaccines work in dogs?](#)

References:

1. Mahachi K, Kontowicz E, Anderson B, et al. Predominant risk factors for tick-borne co-infections in hunting dogs from the USA. Parasit Vectors. 2020;13(1):247.

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