What is canine brucellosis?
Canine brucellosis is a disease caused by the bacterium, *Brucella canis* (*B. canis*). This organism can cause abortions and other reproductive problems in dogs. There is no vaccine available to prevent canine brucellosis and treatment has limited success. The infection can be transmitted from dogs to people, especially during whelping (having puppies). This bacterium belongs to a group of *Brucella* bacteria that causes similar diseases in other animals including cattle, sheep, goats and pigs.

How could my dog get this infection?
*B. canis* is transmitted among dogs by contact with infected urine, vaginal discharges, semen, and tissues and fluids associated with birth and abortion. Dogs come into contact with *B. canis* organisms directly from an infected dog or from a contaminated environment.

How would my veterinarian diagnose brucellosis in my dog?
A blood sample is taken from your dog and tested to detect the presence of *B. canis* antibodies. The presence of antibodies indicates the animal has been exposed to the *B. canis* bacteria. Dogs that test positive with the screening test should have an additional test(s) performed to confirm the infection. A confirmatory test detects the presence of the *Brucella* bacteria in the animal.

Should I treat my infected dog?
Dogs with canine brucellosis can sometimes be successfully treated with antibiotics and surgery (i.e. neutering or spaying). However, treatment failures are common, especially in male dogs. Because the disease is easily spread from dog-to-dog in kennel environments, affected kennel dogs are usually euthanized. Proper treatment should be supervised by your veterinarian.

Can I get *B. canis* from my dog?
Yes, *B. canis* is zoonotic which means it can be passed from infected dogs to the people in close contact with them. People who help with whelping such as dog breeders and veterinarians are at a higher risk for infection.

What are the signs and symptoms of canine brucellosis in people?
Illness in people may include nonspecific signs of one or more of the following: intermittent fever, fatigue, headache, weakness, malaise, chills, sweats, weight loss, enlargement of the liver and/or spleen, and swollen lymph nodes. In rare instances, more serious complications can occur. Please contact your healthcare provider if you have concerns about exposure or possible illness.

If I breed dogs, what should I do?
Require that all adult dogs be tested for canine brucellosis prior to purchasing them and test them again prior to breeding. If you have identified *B. canis* infected dogs in your kennel, consult with your veterinarian to develop a plan to eliminate the disease from your kennel.

How can I prevent this disease in future litters?
Canine brucellosis is a challenging disease to control. Recommendations include serial testing and removal of infected animals, breeding management changes, cleaning and disinfection of kennel surfaces and maintaining dry exercise yards.

Additional Information:
- National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians
- Minnesota Department of Health
- US Centers for Disease Control

This fact sheet is meant to provide basic information. For specific health concerns please contact your physician or veterinarian. Updated 2013.