

## **Babesiosis (Piroplasmosis)**

Canine babesiosis is caused by different strains of the intraerythrocytic protozoan parasite *Babesia canis*, and increasingly by *Babesia gibsoni*, which is extending its range in the USA and Europe. The relative importance of tick species in the transmission of canine babesiosis varies with geographical location.

The clinicopathogenesis of babesiosis caused by *B. canis canis*, the prevalent strain in Europe, and *B. gibsoni* involves progressive haemolytic anaemia. By contrast, the more severe disease caused by *B. canis rossi* in South Africa can involve hypoxic, hypotensive shock with disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC), systemic inflammatory response syndrome and multiple organ dysfunction syndrome. The severity of disease also varies with the species of vector, and the age, breed and immune status of the dog.

Persistent infection with *B. canis* or *B. gibsoni* is common in endemic areas. Although these animals appear healthy unless subjected to stress, they provide a reservoir of infection for susceptible animals and have suboptimal athletic performance.