

# Leptospirosis and Your Pet

## What is leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a disease caused by spiral shaped bacteria that can affect humans, as well as wild and domestic animals, such as dogs and cats. In people, the symptoms are often like the flu, but sometimes leptospirosis can develop into a more severe, life-threatening illness with infections in the kidneys, liver, brain, lungs, and heart. Your pet can get leptospirosis too. This information will show you how to protect yourself and your pets and what to do if your pet does become infected.

## How do people and animals Get leptospirosis?

The bacteria are spread through the urine of infected animals, which can get into water and soil. Humans and animals can become infected through contact with this contaminated urine, water, or soil. The bacteria can enter the body through broken skin or mucous membranes. Drinking contaminated water can also spread infection.

## What are the signs of leptospirosis in pets?

The clinical signs of leptospirosis vary and are nonspecific, including fever, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea, decrease in appetite, severe weakness and depression, stiffness, severe muscle pain, or inability to have puppies. Generally younger animals are more seriously affected than older animals. Contact your veterinarian if you suspect leptospirosis.

## What is the treatment for leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is treatable with antibiotics. If treated early, your pet may recover more rapidly and any organ damage may be less severe. Other treatment methods, such as dialysis and hydration therapy, may be required.

## What should I do if my pet has leptospirosis?

If leptospirosis has been confirmed by your veterinarian, the appropriate action to take will depend on your nature of contact with your pet. Normal daily activities with your pet will not put you at high risk for leptospirosis infection. Types of contacts that are considered to be high risk include direct or indirect contact with urine, blood, and tissues of your pet during its infection. Assisting in the delivery of newborns from an infected animal is also considered high-risk.

If you have had high-risk contact with your pet during the time of its infection, see your physician immediately.

## How can I prevent leptospirosis in my pet?

Keep rodent problems (rats, mice, or other animal pests) under control and get your pet vaccinated against leptospirosis. The vaccine does not provide 100% infection because there are many strains of leptospires, and the vaccine does not provide immunity against all strains. It is important to get your pet vaccinated again even if it gets leptospirosis because it can still get infected with a different strain of leptospires.

# LEPTOSPIROSIS

- What is Lepto?
  - A bacterial infection of the Urinary System
- How do they get infected?
  - The organism (leptospira) survives in the surface waters
    - Swamps, streams and rivers

It is a water born bacteria. Dogs contract Leptospirosis by direct contact with infected urine or contaminated water sources, bite wounds, ingesting infected tissue or exposure during birth.

Once the body contracts Lepto they spread rapidly via the lymph system ->bloodstream -> all tissues.

If an animal mounts an immune response and survives, Lepto will be cleared from most organs and bloodstream. HOWEVER – the infection persists in sites hidden from the Immune system. Most common site – kidneys. Persistence in the kidneys result in a carrier state; the infected animal may shed lepto in the urine for AT LEAST 1 yr.

Infection may be with or without signs or cause very early signs

- fever
- jaundice
- joint or muscle pain
- loss of appetite +/- Vomiting/Diarrhea
- weakness
- discharge from eyes/nose
- dehydration
- Dark Pink/Red gums
- Sudden Death (Uncommon)

Sudden kidney failure occurs in 80-90 % of infected animals

**\*ZOO NOTIC\***

Vaccines – 2 doses are given 2 – 4 weeks apart. Annual Revaccination