



LEPTOSPIROSIS

What is Leptospirosis ?

Leptospirosis (Lepto, for short) is a bacterial disease that can infect pets, farm animals, wildlife and even humans.

The disease-causing bacteria are spread through the urine of infected animals, and can survive for up to 6 months in soil and surface water such as lakes, stream, rivers and stagnant areas of water such as puddles.

Leptospirosis can cause fever, kidney failure, jaundice (from liver damage) and death.

How is Leptospirosis spread ?

Lepto is usually spread when an opening in the skin or mucous membranes, such as eyes, nose or mouth, comes in contact with infected urine. **Your dog can be exposed to the bacteria by drinking, swimming, or walking through contaminated water.** The curious nature of your dog, following their nose, may also bring them in contact with infected urine.

Rats, mice, raccoons, skunks, deer and possums as well as cattle and pigs are the primary carriers of Lepto.

The Threat to Humans

The Centers for Disease Control reports up to 200 cases of Lepto occur each year in the U.S. in **people**. While the disease results in flu-like symptoms, in some situations, the disease can develop into a life-threatening illness.

Clinical Signs and Symptoms ... Diagnosis ... Treatment for Dogs

Leptospirosis primarily affects the kidneys and/or liver.

Signs and symptoms of Lepto in dogs appear 4 to 12 days after exposure. Sometimes, the infections are mild and minimal problems may occur. However, more severe cases will first start as a fever, followed by loss of appetite and weight loss. Then vomiting, sluggishness, depression, muscle pain, diarrhea, and bloody urine may occur.

Tests can be run to determine if your dog has Leptospirosis. To treat the disease, we use antibiotics and fluids. If left untreated, your dog could develop a fatal kidney failure or liver failure.

If a dog recovers without treatment, it can become a carrier and shed the bacteria in the urine for up to 1 year.

What Dogs are at Highest Risk of Getting Leptospirosis ?

Your dog is considered at risk of contracting Lepto if ...

- **Wildlife (primarily raccoons, skunks, possums, rats, mice and deer) comes into your yard, or your dog has access to areas where wildlife live**
- **Your dog has access to livestock (primarily cattle and pigs)**
- **Your dog has access to puddles in your backyard, ponds, streams, lakes, wet areas or areas where water stands**
- **You take your dog camping**
- **Your dog has access to a wooded area**

How Can I Protect My Dog to Prevent Him / Her from Getting Lepto ?

Vaccinating your dog annually against Leptospirosis will prevent the disease ... and keeping your dog from drinking, swimming in or wading in water that could potentially be contaminated with animal urine.