

## How Can I Help Protect My Dog from Leptospirosis?

- ✦ **Remember...Protection = Prevention!** To help protect your dog from this potentially fatal disease, vaccination is key. By vaccinating your dog before exposure to the disease, you can help avoid the emotional and financial trauma it can inflict.
- ✦ Vaccination to help prevent leptospirosis is affordable, effective and safe. Talk to your veterinarian about incorporating it into your dog's routine vaccination program.
- ✦ When dogs are initially vaccinated against leptospirosis, a series of two shots is required. Thereafter, dogs with continued risk of exposure are typically revaccinated annually.

For more information  
about this and other canine diseases,  
visit your veterinarian.

### References

1. Rodriguez, J., Blais, M.-C., Lapointe, C., Arsenault, J., Carioto, L. and Harel, J. (2014), Serologic and Urinary PCR Survey of Leptospirosis in Healthy Cats and in Cats with Kidney Disease. *J Vet Intern Med*, 28: 284–293.
2. Leptospirosis. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site. Available at [https://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/health\\_care\\_workers/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/health_care_workers/index.html). Accessed September 7, 2017.

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The Risk Is Real:  
Lepto May Be  
A Problem As Close  
As Your Own Backyard.

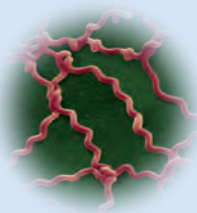
LEPTOSPIROSIS

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# Frequently Asked Questions About Leptospirosis

## What is Leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis (pronounced lep-toh-sper-OH-sis) is a bacterial disease that can be found in most animals, including livestock (cattle, pigs and sheep) and wildlife (deer, raccoons, opossums, skunks, rats and other rodents). The bacteria are passed via the urine into water sources, where they can reside.



Spiral-shaped *Leptospira* bacteria (leptospire) can infect pets, wildlife and people. The bacteria can survive for long periods of time in water, wet soil and infected urine.

## Is This a Problem Where I Live?

It is important to understand that while some geographies appear to have more cases than others, the bacteria that cause leptospirosis can be found in almost any area regardless of if it's rural, suburban or urban. Freshwater sources, moist soil and urine from wildlife and rodents can all be contaminated and serve as sources of infection. Additionally, natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes may present an increased risk of exposure to this disease.

## Can My Dog Get Leptospirosis?

- ★ Your dog can become infected with *Leptospira* by drinking, swimming in or walking through contaminated water or areas frequented by rodents and wildlife. Bacteria can enter the bloodstream through a cut in the skin or through mucous membranes (such as eyes, nose or mouth).
- ★ Leptospirosis is a zoonotic disease, meaning that it can be spread between many different species as well as to humans. Infected dogs can transmit the disease to dogs which might otherwise be considered to have a low risk of infection.
- ★ Exposure can occur year round; however, the risk increases during the summer and early fall months as well as other periods of high rainfall.



Any time your dog comes in contact with wildlife or their habitat, the risk of exposure to, and infection from, *Leptospira* bacteria increases.

## Can Cats Catch This Disease?

Although cats are potentially at risk for leptospirosis, they appear to have natural resistance. For this reason, cats are not vaccinated for leptospirosis.<sup>1</sup>

## Can People Get Leptospirosis?

- ★ Yes. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that up to 200 human cases of leptospirosis a year are identified in the United States.<sup>2</sup>
- ★ While the majority of human cases are not fatal, the disease can cause severe illness.
- ★ You may reduce disease risk by complying with the following preventative measures:
  1. Help prevent the preventable and vaccinate your dog.
  2. Livestock, rodents and wildlife may also be infected. Vaccines are available for some species of livestock.
  3. Be aware that fresh water sources such as lakes, ponds, streams and even puddles can potentially be contaminated with leptospira, the bacteria which cause leptospirosis.
  4. Practice good sanitation, including washing your and your children's hands — especially when handling any items that might be contaminated with urine.
  5. If your occupation or lifestyle involves routine exposure to wildlife and/or standing water, wear protective clothing to avoid exposure.



Children may be particularly vulnerable due to their close contact with pets, play habits and irregular hygiene.



Any dog and human may be at risk to become infected. Even recreational activities like fishing or kayaking can potentially pose a risk.

## What are the Signs of Leptospirosis in Dogs?

Look for the following signs that could indicate your dog has been infected with *Leptospira*:

- ★ Flu-like symptoms are most common, including
  - Fever
  - Loss of appetite
  - Vomiting
  - Diarrhea
  - Dehydration
  - Weakness
  - Depression
  - Lethargy
- ★ Jaundice, marked by a yellow cast in the gums of the mouth and whites of the eyes.



Leptospirosis cases may be severe and can lead to kidney failure and/or liver failure and may be fatal.

## How is Leptospirosis Diagnosed and Treated?

- ★ Your veterinarian is the best person to diagnose and treat leptospirosis because leptospirosis can look like many other diseases especially in the early stages of infection. Diagnostic tests on blood and/or urine are necessary to diagnose an infection.
- ★ Treatment for leptospirosis can be very costly and may be extensive. Antibiotics are almost always included. Other supportive care such as IV fluids, oxygen support, plasma transfusions and even dialysis may also be needed depending on the severity of the disease.



If you suspect leptospirosis in your dog, notify your veterinarian promptly to increase your dog's recovery success.