



LEPTOSPIROSIS

What Every Pet Owner Should Know

What Is Leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease. It occurs all over the world and can affect humans as well as many wild and domestic animals, including dogs and cats. Cases seen in cats are rare. The disease can be serious for both humans and animals.

How Do People And Dogs Get Leptospirosis?

The bacteria are spread through urine of infected animals, which can get into water or soil and survive there for weeks to months. Humans or animals can become infected through contact with this contaminated urine, blood, water or soil. The bacteria enters the body through the skin, eyes, nose or mouth or drinking the contaminated water. In addition, pets may be exposed through contact with infected wildlife such as rats, mice, voles, raccoons, skunks, squirrels, opossums or deer. Swine and cattle can also be infected. Dogs may pass the bacteria to each other although this rarely occurs.

What Are The Signs Of Leptospirosis In My Dog?

Common clinical signs reported in dogs include fever, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea, refusal to eat, severe weakness and depression, stiffness, severe muscle pain, or an inability to have puppies. Contracting the disease causes acute liver and kidney failure which is treatable however permanent kidney damage often persists.

How Can I Protect My Dog From Leptospirosis?

There are a few things that you can do to decrease the risk of exposure to you and your pet.

- Keep rodent problems under control
- Don't allow your pet to drink from or swim in ponds, streams, puddles or bird baths
- Vaccinate those pets facing the most serious risk factors

Is There A Vaccine Available?

There is an available vaccine. Evidence suggest that the primary vaccine requires 2 doses 3 weeks apart with yearly boosters. As with many of the vaccines available, the Leptospirosis vaccine may not be 100% effective but the newer generation of the vaccine is safer and more effective than in the past leading specialists to recommend the vaccine for the majority of dogs.

Should you vaccinate your dog?

No dog is without risk of contracting Leptospirosis. The highest incidence is often in urban areas with higher populations of rats. Although there is a slightly higher risk of allergic reactions compared to other vaccines, the benefits outway the potential risks. Some possible vaccine reactions are fever, swelling at injection site and or hives. If you feel that your pet has an increased risk, please feel free to discuss this with the Technician and or the Doctor during your office visit.