

Leptospirosis: A Client Handout

What is Leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a disease caused by spiral shaped bacteria called leptospire. It occurs worldwide and can affect humans as well as many wild and domestic animals, including 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 kidney, liver, brain, lung, and heart.



How do people and animals get Leptospirosis

The bacteria are spread through the urine of infected animals, which can get into water or soil and can survive there for weeks to months. Humans and animals can become infected through contact with this contaminated urine, water, or soil.

The bacteria can enter the body through skin or mucous membranes (eyes, nose, or mouth), especially if the skin is broken from a cut or scratch.

What are the signs of leptospirosis in pets?

The clinical signs of leptospirosis vary and are nonspecific. Sometimes pets do not have any symptoms. Common clinical signs reported in dogs include fever, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea, refusal to eat, severe weakness and depression, stiffness, or severe muscle pain. Generally, younger animals are more seriously affected than older animals.

How can I prevent Leptospirosis in my pet?

- Get your pet vaccinated against Leptospirosis.
 - Due to multiple strains of leptospres, the vaccine does not provide 100% protection. However, it is still the best line of defense against the bacteria.
- Keep rodent problems (rats, mice, etc.) under control. Rodents can carry and spread the bacteria.

Is there treatment for Leptospirosis in pet animals?

Yes, Leptospirosis is treatable with antibiotics. If an animal is treated early, it may recover more rapidly and any organ damage may be less severe. Other treatments methods, such as dialysis and hydration therapy may be required.

ⁱ Images and information provided by the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention