



Leptospirosis Prevention

1. What is leptospirosis?

- a. Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection that can affect people, companion animals, livestock, and wildlife. The disease is transmitted by direct contact, like bite wounds, and indirect contact, most commonly by contact with stagnant water contaminated with the urine of infected animals. The disease can cause high temperatures, liver and kidney damage, and may become fatal if not diagnosed and treated with appropriate antibiotics early in the course of the disease.

2. How do I know if my dog already has leptospirosis?

- a. Early symptoms include elevated temperature and lethargy.
- b. Later symptoms are vaguer, like kidney and other organ failure. This phase is more difficult to diagnose and treat because it can mimic many other types of disease.
- c. Blood tests specific for leptospirosis antibody confirm your dog's exposure to the bacteria.
- d. Not all dogs exposed to the bacteria show symptoms or act ill. There are several serotypes and only 3 or 4 are known to cause significant disease in the dog.

3. Can leptospirosis be treated?

- a. Many, but not all, strains of leptospirosis are antibiotic responsive. This is especially true in the early course of the disease.
- b. Due to the difficulty in properly diagnosing leptospirosis and the expense associated with testing, many cases are in the late phase before treatment starts. This phase is less responsive to antibiotic treatment.

4. Is my dog at risk for leptospirosis?

- a. YES! Many dogs are at risk for exposure to these bacteria. The highest risks have been associated with exposure to wildlife and warm, stagnant water, like puddles, swamps, or marshland.
- b. The disease is prevalent in many areas of Minnesota and Wisconsin. The University of Minnesota has reported an increase in leptospirosis cases the last several years.

5. How can we prevent leptospirosis in my dog?

- a. Keep dogs out of low-lying and marshy areas during the summer and fall. Appropriately, fence yards to limit exposure between pets and wildlife.
- b. Leptospirosis vaccination is also a potentially effective form of preventing this disease. We are currently recommending vaccination for dogs that are exposed to dense animal settings like dog parks, competitions and kennels, low-lying or marshy areas, and wildlife. The first year, we recommend initial vaccination and then a booster administered 3-4 weeks later. For best protection, we recommend annual re-administration of the vaccine in the late spring of the year to provide optimum protection during the periods of highest transmission (late summer and fall).

Our recommendations for your pet: _____