



Leptospirosis

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Animal Health



What is leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is an infectious disease found in urban, suburban, and rural environments across the US. The disease is caused by spiral-shaped bacteria called leptospires that live in water or warm, wet soil.

The spread of leptospirosis puts virtually every dog, from the biggest breeds to toy-sized terriers—and even you—at risk!



What are the signs of leptospirosis?

The signs of leptospirosis in dogs can vary. Some infected dogs do not show any signs of illness, some have mild illness and recover, while others develop severe illness, which can even result in death. Signs of leptospirosis in your dog can include¹:

- Fever
- Muscle tenderness
- Increased thirst
- Changes in urination
- Vomiting and diarrhea
- Loss of appetite



RATS, SQUIRRELS, RACCOONS, OPOSSUMS, and other wildlife can all be carriers of leptospirosis.^{2,3}



How serious is leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis can have life-threatening effects on the kidneys, liver, lungs, and heart. Even dogs that recover may still be at risk for chronic kidney failure.⁴

80% TO 90%

OF DOGS WITH LEPTOSPIROSIS



develop short-term, but serious, kidney problems that may put them at risk of **chronic kidney failure.**⁵

How does leptospirosis spread?

The bacteria that cause leptospirosis are spread through the urine of infected animals, which can get into water or soil and survive there for weeks or months.³ The bacteria enter the body through the eyes, nose, or mouth, or through a cut or scratch.²

If the bacteria reach a dog's kidneys or bladder, the dog may become a carrier, spreading the bacteria each time it urinates.

Your veterinarian will likely do a **blood or urine test** to diagnose the disease.



Which dogs are at risk of leptospirosis?



RURAL DOGS

Dogs that work, hunt, or play in the great outdoors, or are in contact with livestock



SUBURBAN DOGS

Dogs that share backyards and neighborhoods with wildlife



URBAN DOGS

Dogs that walk on public sidewalks, visit dog parks, or explore communal areas

Protect yourself and your family.

If your dog becomes infected with leptospirosis, do not handle or come in contact with the urine before your dog has received treatment.

Use rubber gloves when handling urine or cleaning your dog's bedding, housing, and surrounding areas.⁶

Both animals and humans can become infected with leptospirosis.



How can I protect my dog from leptospirosis?



Limit exposure to rodents

Keep rodents (rats, mice, and other pests) under control. Maintaining a rodent-free environment will drastically decrease the threat of leptospirosis to your dog.



Avoid standing water

Drain areas of standing water on your property where leptospires may thrive. Don't let your dog swim or play in slow-moving creeks or water sources where wild animals may swim, drink, or urinate.

Vaccination can help protect your dog against leptospirosis when exposed to the bacteria.

Check out the back cover for a **leptospirosis protection checklist.**



Assess your dog's risk of leptospirosis.

Does my dog really need to be vaccinated against leptospirosis?

You can lower your dog's risk of leptospirosis by limiting exposure to potential sources of contamination such as stagnant water, rodents, and poorly maintained canine facilities. The best way to protect your dog, however, is with an annual vaccination.

Where can I learn more about leptospirosis?

Ask your veterinarian if you have further questions about leptospirosis or vaccination.



To find out more visit
StopLepto.com

Check YES or NO:

Does your dog have access to wetland areas, such as swamps, marshes, streams, lakes, rivers, drainage ditches, or sources of slow-moving or stagnant water?

☐ YES
☐ NO

Does your dog roam rural fields, woodlands, suburban parks, or new housing developments where wildlife, such as deer, raccoons, opossums, skunks, and other animals may be present?

☐ YES
☐ NO

Does your dog live in an urban environment and walk through puddles or areas of pooling water after it rains?

☐ YES
☐ NO

Does your dog live in an area that experiences heavy rainfall or frequent flooding?

☐ YES
☐ NO

SHARE YOUR ANSWERS WITH YOUR VET.

If you answered YES to any of the above questions, it is likely that your dog would benefit from leptospirosis vaccination.

Leptospirosis prevention checklist

- 1 Make sure your dog is vaccinated against leptospirosis.
- 2 Drain areas of standing water on your property.
- 3 Don't let your dog swim or play in slow-moving creeks or in water sources accessible to wild animals.
- 4 Keep rodents (rats, mice, and other pests) under control.
- 5 Be aware of any changes in your dog's health or behavior. Watch for signs of leptospirosis and contact your veterinarian immediately if you see any.



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References: 1. Leptospirosis. American Veterinary Medical Association website. Accessed February 9, 2023. <https://www.avma.org/resources/pet-owners/petcare/leptospirosis> 2. Infections in pets. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. Updated June 9, 2015. Accessed February 9, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/pets/infection/index.html> 3. Leptospirosis: pets. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. Accessed February 9, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/pets/index.html> 4. Lunn KF. Leptospirosis in dogs. Merck Veterinary Manual website. Accessed February 9, 2023. <https://www.merckvetmanual.com/generalized-conditions/leptospirosis/leptospirosis-in-dogs#> 5. Sykes JE, Raegen KL. Leptospirosis in dogs: diagnosis, treatment, and management. *Today's Veterinary Practice* website. Published August 9, 2019. Accessed February 9, 2023. <https://todaysveterinarypractice.com/diagnosis-and-treatment-of-leptospirosis-in-dogs/> 6. Leptospirosis: prevention in pets. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. Updated June 9, 2015. Accessed February 9, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/pets/prevention/index.html>