

## How Can I 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 may avoid the emotional and financial trauma of dealing with this disease.
- ★ Vaccines are affordable, convenient and safe. Talk to your veterinarian about which vaccine is best and how to incorporate it into your dog's routine vaccination program.

## Do Vaccines Prevent the Most Common Canine Leptospira?

- ★ The most complete leptospirosis protection is with vaccines containing the four most common strains of *Leptospira* bacteria diagnosed today.
- ★ Cornell University reported that the vast majority of leptospirosis cases they diagnosed in dogs were caused by two strains.<sup>1</sup>
- ★ Vaccination for leptospirosis is routinely administered to dogs in combination with other common canine vaccines.
- ★ Your veterinarian will initially recommend a two-shot series. Revaccination frequency will be based on your dog's risk of exposure.

"Four-way" Leptospirosis vaccines help provide the most complete protection for your dog.

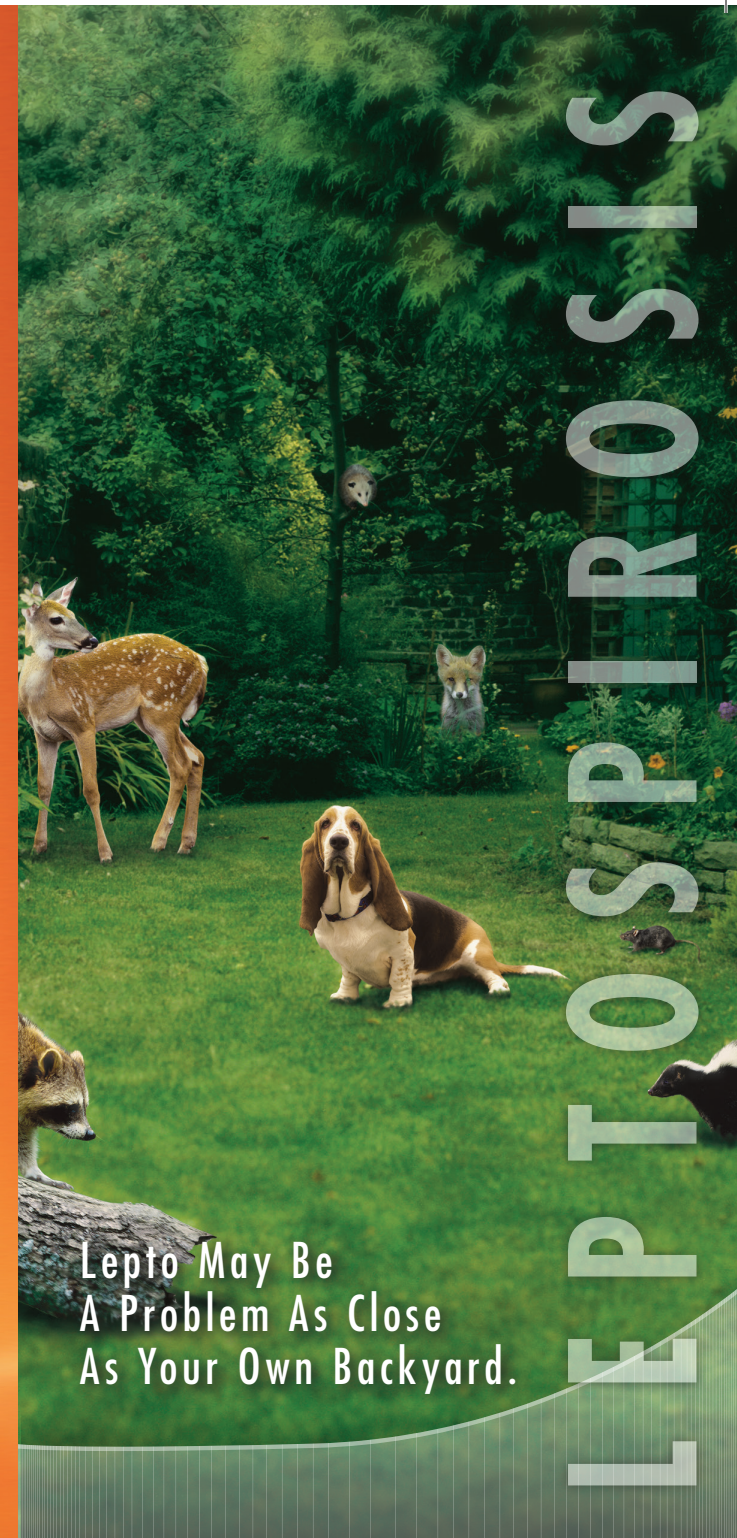


For more information about this and other canine diseases, visit your veterinarian.

### References

1. Carmichael LE. Canine viral vaccines at a turning point – a personal perspective. *Adv Vet Med*. 1999;41:289-307.
2. Leptospirosis. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site. Available at [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/leptospirosis\\_g.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/leptospirosis_g.htm). Accessed March 5, 2009.

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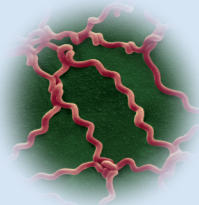
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# Frequently Asked Questions about Leptospirosis

## 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?

Leptospirosis is prevalent in rural, suburban and urbanized areas. The bacteria can be present in any stagnant surface water, moist soil and recreational water sources such as ponds and lakes. 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. Bacteria can enter the bloodstream through a cut in the skin or through mucous membranes (such as eyes, nose or mouth).
- ✦ Leptospirosis is a contagious disease and can be transmitted from dog to dog. In urban areas, infected dogs can transmit the disease to otherwise-low-risk dogs.
- ✦ Exposure risk increases during the summer and early fall months, and 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.

## 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 disease is rarely fatal in humans, it can cause severe illness.
- ✦ You may reduce disease risk by complying with the following preventative measures:
  1. Vaccinate your dog and livestock.
  2. Avoid water that might be contaminated with the bacteria, especially water that is stagnant.
  3. Practice good sanitation, including washing your and your children's hands — especially when handling anything that might have your dog's urine on it.
  4. If your occupation or lifestyle involves routine exposure to wildlife 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.



In the most severe cases, the disease can lead to kidney failure 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. It is a challenge to diagnose quickly and may require numerous blood and urine tests. The diagnostic process can be frustrating and costly.
- ✦ To effectively treat leptospirosis, your veterinarian may recommend a combination of intravenous fluids and antibiotics, as well as other aggressive therapies.



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