

Disease Prevention

Leptospirosis in Dogs: What to Watch Out For



As a pet owner, you try to protect your dog from risk as much as possible. Unfortunately, there are dangers lurking right in your backyard or local park that can cause serious harm to your dog. One of these diseases that has been increasingly reported across the U.S. is leptospirosis¹.

What is leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis, also known as “lepto”, is a highly contagious bacterial infection that affects most species of mammals, including dogs².

Leptospirosis is zoonotic (which means it can be passed along to humans). Human symptoms range from flu-like symptoms to kidney failure and even death³.

Leptospirosis bacteria (*leptospira*) penetrates a dog’s body through mucous membranes or open skin and rapidly multiplies in the bloodstream for the following 4-12 days⁴. The bacteria is spread through infected animals’ urine (especially rodent urine) and can survive in soil or water for weeks or months. Dogs can come into contact with the bacteria by walking through, drinking, or even spending time near contaminated water like puddles, mud, standing water, and lakes.

Is my dog at risk for leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis can affect dogs of all shapes and sizes, so your dog could be at risk. Once commonly diagnosed in rural areas, lepto is now being seen more commonly in suburban and urban areas⁵. Dogs that spend time near bodies of water, or even play near mud or puddles, can be at especially high risk for

leptospirosis.

Common risk factors for leptospirosis:

- Walking in the same place as infected wildlife, rodents, or farm animals
- Contact with or drinking from warm, wet environments like streams, lakes, and puddles
- Direct contact with infected animals

Symptoms of leptospirosis in dogs

It's important to note that dogs can be infected and not even show signs of having leptospirosis.

Symptoms of leptospirosis include:

- Fever
- Shivering
- Muscle tenderness
- Increased thirst
- Dehydration
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy
- Jaundice (yellowing of the “whites” of their eyes or the inside of their ears, gums, or belly skin)

If your dog is displaying signs of leptospirosis, see your veterinarian immediately. Delaying treatment can result in severe kidney or liver damage, and even death³.

How can I protect my dog from leptospirosis?

The best way to protect your dog from leptospirosis is to vaccinate them against it. Learn more about the leptospirosis vaccine, and ask your veterinarian about it at your dog's next appointment.

Learn more at zoetispetcare.com

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