

## **Leptospirosis**

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### **Overview**

Leptospirosis is a zoonotic disease that can pass from animals to humans. It is a bacterial disease that damages the liver and kidneys of dogs, sometimes resulting in renal failure and death. It is caused by a spirochete (spiral shaped bacterium) called a leptospire.

Leptospire live in fluids from infected animals, including urine, saliva, blood and milk. The disease is transmitted by direct contact with the fluids or with an infected animal. It is also transmitted by indirect contact such as vegetation, food and water, soil and bedding materials. Leptospire enter the body through mucous membranes or through breaks in the skin. The disease may be carried for years in animals without any apparent symptoms of the disease.

Any age, breed or sex of dog is susceptible to leptospirosis, although in general, young animals are more severely affected than adults. Large breed outdoor adult dogs are most commonly affected.

### **Diagnosis and Treatment Notes:**

- Leptospirosis is generally diagnosed by bloodwork, including a leptospirosis serologic test to detect leptospiral antibodies. In some cases, a kidney biopsy is necessary to make or confirm the diagnosis.
- Treatment depends on the severity of the disease, your individual pet, and your veterinarian. Dogs diagnosed with leptospirosis are treated with antibiotics such as penicillin or tetracycline. Those with kidney failure are also treated with fluid therapy and other medications. Discuss treatment details when your pet is diagnosed with this condition.

### **What to Watch for\*:**

- Chills and fever
- Lack of appetite
- Weight loss
- Generalized muscle tenderness
- Dehydration
- Blood in the vomit or stool, bloody nose or widespread bruising
- Jaundice

- Labored breathing or coughing
- Sudden lack of production of urine

*\*Please notify us if you notice any of the above signs or if you have any questions!*