

Leptospirosis **Alert!**

Protect your dog against this contagious and potentially fatal disease.

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 reside and reproduce.

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 present in increased risk of exposure to this disease.

Can My Dog Get **Leptospirosis**?

- Your dog can become infected with **Leptospirosis** 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 be transmit the disease to otherwise-low-risk dogs.
- Exposure risk increases during the summer and early fall months, and other periods of high rainfall.

Can Cats Catch This Disease?

Although cats are potentially at risk for **Leptospirosis**, they appear to have a 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.
- 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:
 - Vaccinate your dog and livestock.
 - Avoid water that might be contaminated with the bacteria, especially water that is stagnant.
 - Practice good sanitation, including washing your and your children's hands- especially when handling anything that might have your dog's urine on it.
 - If your occupation or lifestyle involves routine exposure to wildlife or standing water, wear protective clothing to avoid exposure.

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What Are the Signs of **Leptospirosis** in Dogs?

Look for the following signs that could indicate your dog has been infected with

Leptospirosis:

- 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?

- The staff at Legacy Veterinary Hospital is the best people 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**, Legacy Veterinary Hospital may recommend a combination of intravenous fluids and antibiotics, as well as other aggressive therapies.

How Can I Protect My Dog from **Leptospirosis**?

- *Remember... Protection = Prevention!*
 - To 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 Legacy Veterinary Hospital about which vaccines 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 recently reported that the vast majority of **Leptospirosis** cases they diagnosed in dogs were caused by two strains.
- Vaccination for **Leptospirosis** is routinely administered to dogs in combination with other common canine vaccines.
- Legacy Veterinary Hospital will initially recommend a two-shot series. Revaccination frequency will be based on your dog's risk of exposure.

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References

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2. **Leptospirosis**. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site. Available at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/leptospirosis_t.htm. Accessed December 7, 2005.
3. Pfizer Animal Health. *Leptospirosis Alert! Protect your dog against this contagious and potentially fatal disease.* ©2006 Pfizer Inc