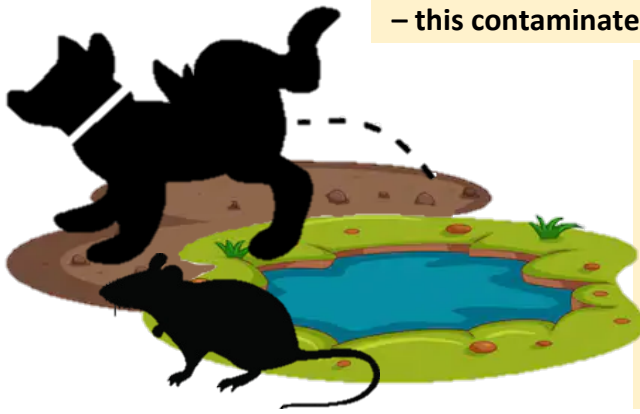


LEPTOSPIROSIS: THE FACTS

Leptospirosis is caused by thin spiral-shaped *Leptospira* bacteria



Leptospira bacteria are excreted in the urine of rats (the reservoir host) and infected dogs – this contaminates soil, water and bedding.



WAYS YOUR DOG CAN GET INFECTED:

- Bacteria splashing in their eyes, mouth, or open cuts and wounds
- Drinking contaminated water (e.g. ponds or stagnant water)
- Through their skin if they swim in contaminated water

Cats are not affected by Leptospirosis.

HOW COMMON IS LEPTOSPIROSIS?

Leptospirosis is more common in Queensland where it is humid and warm. However, the recent outbreak in Sydney is due to the recent rainfall, flooding, and high rat population in the Inner West. The bacteria can survive for months to years in the correct conditions.



WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Leptospirosis affects the kidneys and liver. It may also affect the lungs and blood. Symptoms are non-specific:

- Increased thirst and urination
- Jaundice (yellow eyes, gums or skin)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Loss of appetite
- Painful abdomen
- Fever
- Muscle and joint pain
- Difficulty breathing, fast breathing, coughing
- Bleeding (from the skin, gums, or in vomit/faeces)



CAN IT BE TREATED?

Leptospirosis is responsive to treatment with antibiotics for at least 3 weeks. Some dogs may also require supportive care (such as IV fluids, anti-nausea medication, liver support medications or blood transfusions). Prognosis is generally fair, but is poorer if the lungs are involved. Some dogs may have life-long chronic kidney and liver disease. Without treatment, organ failure and death can result.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR DOG FROM LEPTOSPIROSIS:

1. Limit your dog's access to rats, stagnant water and ponds. Do not let them swim in this water or drink from it while on walks.
2. Vaccinate your dog, especially if you live in an area with a high rat population. Initial vaccination is followed by a booster in 3-4 weeks. The New Lepto 2 Vaccine recommended by Sydney University is now in stock at Summer Hill Village Vet and protects against the two offending serovars or "strains" seen in our area. (The old vaccine only protects against one serovar).



PROTECT YOURSELF!

Leptospirosis is a zoonotic disease, meaning it can transmit from animals to humans! Wear gloves and wash your hands thoroughly after being in contact with your dog's urine. Children and immunocompromised people are at greater risk. Consult your GP for more advice.