

Leptospirosis in dogs

Overview

- Leptospirosis is a nasty disease caused by bacteria.
- It causes damage to the liver and kidneys and is sadly, often fatal.
- Leptospirosis spreads via other infected dogs, mice, rats and cows and can also be caught from infected water.
- Your dog is at higher risk of catching leptospirosis if they regularly kill rodents, live on a farm or spend a lot of time in water.
- Leptospirosis can infect people and is commonly known as Weil's disease.
- Fortunately, we can vaccinate against leptospirosis – keep your dog protected with regular boosters.



Fortunately, we can vaccinate against leptospirosis.

What is Leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis (often shortened to leptospirosis) is an infectious disease caused by bacteria. Dogs can catch leptospirosis by coming into contact

with urine from an infected animal or from contaminated water. Rats can carry leptospirosis and are a particular risk for dogs that like hunting and spending time in water. Leptospirosis is a serious, often fatal disease that damages the liver and kidneys. Leptospirosis can also pass to people and make them very poorly.

There are a group of bacteria that cause leptospirosis – each one slightly different. We vaccinate pet dogs against the types of leptospirosis most commonly found in the UK.

Symptoms

If your dog catches leptospirosis, their symptoms will depend on how much immunity (protection) they have, which leptospirosis bacteria they have caught, and which organs it attacks. Symptoms can include:

- Fever (high temperature)
- Jaundice (yellow gums and eyes)
- Muscle pain and limping
- Weakness and collapse
- Off food
- Drinking more
- Vomiting
- Bloody diarrhoea
- Bleeding from the mouth and eyes
- Mouth ulcers

Causes

Leptospirosis bacteria enter the body through the mouth, nose, or wounds. Once inside the body leptospirosis attacks vital organs, particularly the liver and kidneys.

Treatment

If your dog has a mild case of leptospirosis, your vet may use antibiotics, a fluid drip and other medicines to help fight the disease. In more severe cases, symptoms often start suddenly, cause serious illness and sometimes death. If your dog has a severe form of leptospirosis, you may need to consider putting them to sleep to stop them suffering.

Dogs with leptospirosis must be treated in isolation so that they don't pass the disease on to other pets or hospital staff. Even after they've recovered, dogs can keep spreading leptospirosis germs in their urine and remain a risk to other pets and people for some time.

Outlook

Leptospirosis is a very serious disease that sadly, many dogs don't recover from.

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet for an appointment if you see any symptoms of leptospirosis in your dog, particularly if they've never been vaccinated or have missed any booster shots. Your dog is at higher risk of catching leptospirosis if they regularly kill rodents, live on a farm or spend a lot of time in water.

You know your dog best, if they don't have the symptoms listed above but you are still concerned, always contact your vet.

Prevention

Vaccinating every year will give your dog protection from leptospirosis and helps to keep your family and other pets safe. Because there are a few different types of leptospirosis bacteria that cause disease, there are a few different leptospirosis vaccinations available. Speak to your vet about which leptospirosis vaccination will give your dog the best protection.

Cost

Treatment for a dog with leptospirosis is likely to be expensive and unexpected. Consider insuring your dog as soon as you get them, before any signs of illness start. This will ensure you have all the support you need to care for them.

It's also very important to speak openly to your vet about your finances, the cost of treatment, as well as what you think is best for your dog.

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