

LEPTOSPIROSIS UPDATE

What is Leptospirosis?

- Leptospirosis is a disease caused by infection with a bacteria called *Leptospira*. *Leptospira* can be found in rodent urine but it can also be carried by pigs and cattle.
- With the current mouse plague, the risk of our pets contracting Leptospirosis has increased but it is still regarded as an uncommon infection so there is no need to panic!

What clinical signs do I need to watch for?

- Non-specific signs such as inappetence, lethargy, vomiting and diarrhoea
- Fever, shivering and weakness
- Increased thirst and urination with red urine
- Jaundice (the gums/skin/eyes turn yellow)
- Sore stiff muscles
- Swollen lymph nodes

How are dogs infected?

- Dogs can become infected with *Leptospira* if the bacteria enters their body via cuts or abrasions to the skin, or occasionally through the mucous membranes of the mouth, nose and eyes.
- Infection most often occurs through direct contact with the urine of an infected mouse, rat or pig but dogs can also get infected by eating an infected rodent or pig or by getting bitten by an infected animal.
- The *Leptospira* bacteria can survive for up to 2 months in puddles of stagnant water so dogs that drink from or swim in slow moving waterways are also at higher risk.

How are people infected?

- Exposure to the urine of infected animals (rodents or dogs) can transmit Leptospirosis from animals to people – it is what is known as a zoonotic disease.
- NSW Health has reported that cases of Leptospirosis in humans have increased recently due to the mouse plague.

Is there any treatment?

- Infected dogs will need antibiotics and may need intensive supportive care such as intravenous fluids and hospitalisation. Unfortunately not all infected dogs will survive even with treatment as Leptospirosis can cause kidney and liver failure.

Is there a vaccine?

- Thankfully yes there is!
- Dogs need a course of 2 vaccinations 2-4 weeks apart with an annual booster thereafter.
- Please note that the Leptospirosis vaccine does not cover every strain of *Leptospira* bacteria so is not 100% effective (like most vaccines).

If you would like to make a booking to get your dog vaccinated against Leptospirosis or if you are concerned that your dog may be infected, please contact us on 6341 3113.