



LEPTOSPIROSIS FACT SHEET

What is leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that affects animals and humans. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) estimates that 100-200 cases of human leptospirosis are reported each year in the United States.

Where is leptospirosis found?

Leptospirosis can be found worldwide, but is more common in tropical or temperate climates. Because of the heat and high humidity levels, leptospirosis is found in the Harris County area. Many people who work outdoors or with animals may be at risk.

How can you and your pet be exposed to leptospirosis?

Humans and animals can be exposed to leptospirosis by contact with contaminated urine, water or soil. This may happen by swallowing contaminate food or water or through contact with cuts on the skin. Pets can also become infected by sniffing the urine of infected wild or domestic animals. Rodents, wildlife, livestock and dogs can carry this disease, although it is rare in cats. The disease is not known to be spread from person to person.

What are the symptoms in dogs?

Common symptoms in dogs may include fever, vomiting, stomach pain, lack of appetite, diarrhea, depression and yellowing of the skin and eyes. However, some animals may not show any outward symptoms. Consult with your veterinarian if the leptospirosis vaccine is right for your pet.

What are the symptoms in humans?

People may develop symptoms from 2 days to 4 weeks after being exposed. Symptoms include muscle aches, vomiting, fever, stomach pain, diarrhea, rash or yellowing of the skin and eyes. In humans, leptospirosis can cause many symptoms yet some may show no symptoms at all.

How is leptospirosis treated?

Leptospirosis is treated with antibiotics. If the disease is not treated, it can result in meningitis, kidney and/or liver damage. The illness lasts from a few days to 3 weeks or longer.

How can I protect myself?

Protective clothing, such as gloves and boots, should be worn while cleaning areas that may be contaminated. Clean all surfaces with an antibacterial cleaning solution or 1 part bleach to 10 parts water. Wash your hands after handling your pet or contaminated surfaces. Avoid swimming and wading in water that may be contaminated with animal urine. If you think you may have leptospirosis, consult your doctor.

Where can I get more information on leptospirosis?

www.cdc.gov

www.dshs.state.tx.us

Source of Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS)

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