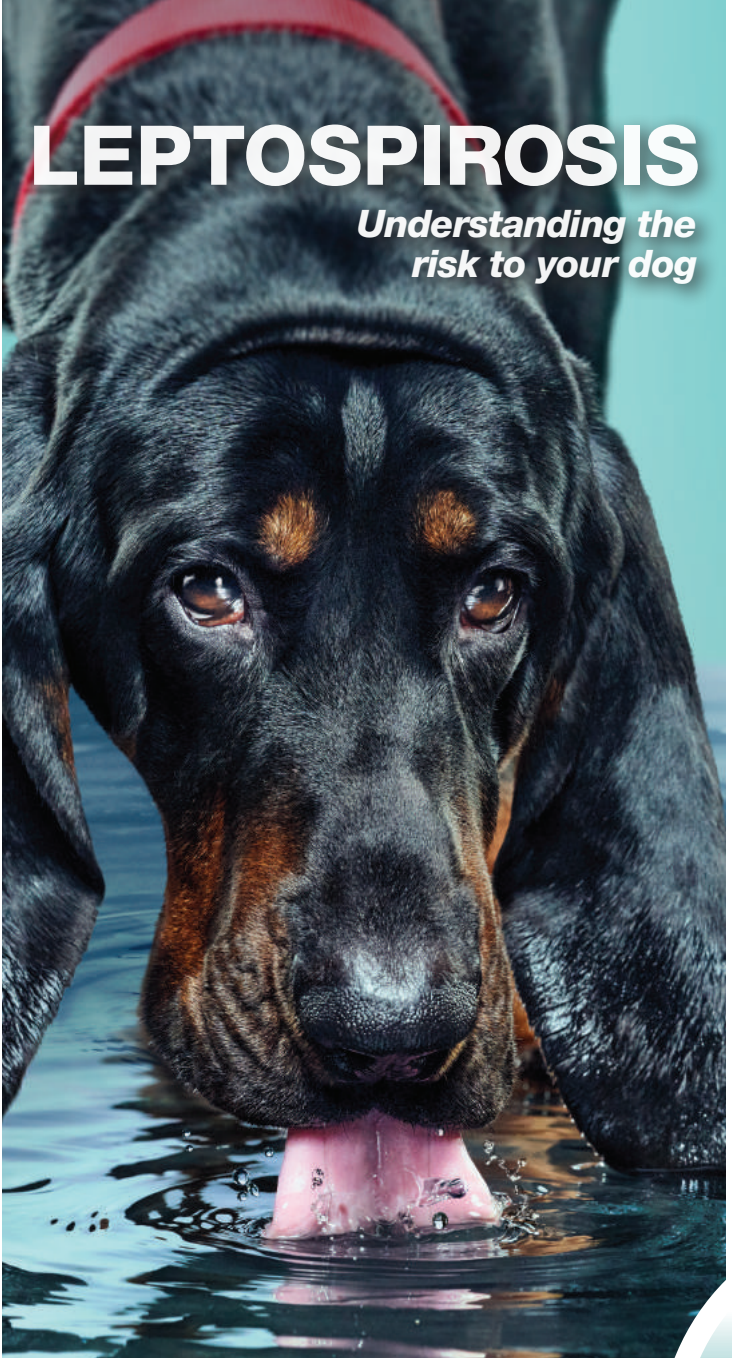


# LEPTOSPIROSIS

*Understanding the  
risk to your dog*



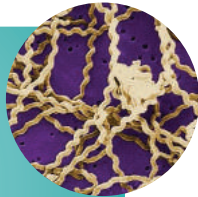


## WHAT IS LEPTOSPIROSIS?

Leptospirosis is an infectious disease that causes serious illness in dogs, other animals, and people throughout the US and around the world. The disease is caused by spiral-shaped bacteria called leptospires that live in water or warm, wet soil. Leptospirosis causes a variety of flu-like symptoms, but it can develop into a more severe, life-threatening illness that affects the kidneys, liver, brain, lungs, and heart.

### LEPTOSPIRES

Long, thin, and flexible, spiral-shaped *Leptospira* bacteria move by twisting and flexing.



## HOW DO DOGS BECOME INFECTED WITH LEPTOSPIROSIS?



The most common way dogs become infected with leptospirosis is by coming into contact with the urine of infected animals — usually in water or on wet ground. Dogs become infected by swimming in or drinking contaminated water or by playing in areas where infected urine is present.

Leptospires enter the body through the dog's eyes, nose, or mouth, or through a break in the skin caused by a cut or scratch. Once a dog has become infected, leptospires multiply and spread to other parts of the body. If the infection reaches the kidneys and bladder, the dog may become a carrier of leptospirosis, spreading the bacteria each time it urinates.



## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF CANINE LEPTOSPIROSIS?

While some dogs will have no obvious symptoms, early signs of leptospirosis usually appear about a week after infection and may include fever, muscle weakness, and a loss of appetite or energy. Some dogs may seem depressed. Other clinical signs include jaundice (yellow eyes or skin) and blood in the urine.

Vomiting and diarrhea may follow after a few days, causing dogs to become dehydrated and very thirsty. This is a warning sign that the infection has reached the kidneys and the dog needs immediate medical care from a veterinarian.

### CALL YOUR VETERINARIAN

if you notice any of these symptoms:

*Fever*  
*Loss of appetite*  
*Loss of energy*  
*Vomiting*  
*Dehydration*  
*Jaundice*

## HOW SERIOUS IS LEPTOSPIROSIS IN DOGS?

More than 80% of dogs with leptospirosis develop serious, short-term kidney problems. And while most dogs get better with prompt treatment, dogs that suffer severe liver or kidney damage can die within days. Even dogs that recover may still be at risk for chronic kidney failure or become carriers of the disease, spreading leptospires during urination.

**>80%**

**OF INFECTED DOGS  
DEVELOP SERIOUS,  
SHORT-TERM  
KIDNEY PROBLEMS**

## HOW IS LEPTOSPIROSIS DIAGNOSED?

Leptospirosis can be difficult to recognize by its clinical signs because the infection affects many different areas of the body and causes a variety of symptoms. However, your veterinarian can diagnose the infection by testing your dog's blood or urine.

### ***Be Aware:***

If your dog has been diagnosed with leptospirosis, you need to take measures to protect yourself and other family members, as the infection can spread to people. Use rubber gloves when handling your dog's urine specimen and when disinfecting the dog's bedding, housing, and surrounding areas.







## WHAT CAN BE DONE IF MY DOG BECOMES INFECTED?

Prompt medical treatment is critical for limiting the spread of the infection to your dog's kidneys, bladder, and liver. The standard treatment for leptospirosis includes intravenous antibiotics and fluids, good nutrition, and supportive care.

If treatment is started early enough, most dogs recover after 2 weeks. Your veterinarian may then prescribe a course of oral antibiotics to make sure the infection is gone and to keep your dog from becoming a carrier of the disease.



## IS MY DOG AT RISK FOR INFECTION?

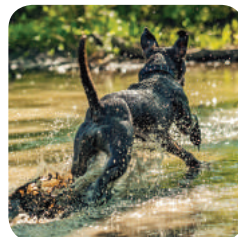
Leptospirosis can be transmitted by a variety of domestic and wild animals. Since rats can spread the disease as well, dogs in urban environments are at risk for this disease. Infected animals shed leptospires in their urine. Certain factors can raise the risk of infection.

### ***Dogs at higher risk for leptospirosis:***



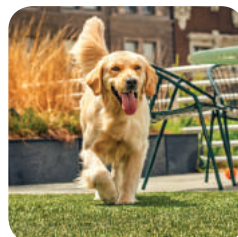
#### **RURAL**

Working, hunting, and herding dogs



#### **SUBURBAN**

Dogs living near water or share their backyard with wildlife



#### **CITY**

Dogs living in urban areas that harbor rodents



## HOW CAN I PROTECT MY DOG FROM LEPTOSPIROSIS?

You can try to lower your dog's risk of leptospirosis by limiting exposure to potential sources of contamination (stagnant water, rodents, unmaintained canine facilities), but the best way to protect your dog is with an annual vaccination that protects against the major causes of leptospirosis. Currently, vaccines are available to protect against the 4 most common types of leptospires.

## IS VACCINATION AGAINST LEPTOSPIROSIS SAFE?

Dogs have been vaccinated against leptospirosis for many years, and while minor side effects can occur, the vaccines are generally safe and well tolerated. Sometimes dogs experience tenderness or swelling at the injection site that usually resolves quickly.





## WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT LEPTOSPIROSIS?

Ask your veterinarian if you have further questions about leptospirosis or vaccination. You can also explore these two informative websites to learn more:

[cdc.gov/leptospirosis](https://cdc.gov/leptospirosis)  
[StopLepto.com](https://StopLepto.com)



# ASSESS YOUR DOG'S RISK OF LEPTOSPIROSIS

## *Does my dog really need to be vaccinated against leptospirosis?*

Take this survey to find out your dog's risk of getting leptospirosis. Check either **YES** or **NO**.

- 1** Does your dog have access to wetland areas such as swamps, marshes, streams, lakes, rivers, drainage ditches, or sources of slow-moving or stagnant water? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- 2** Does your dog roam rural fields, woodlands, suburban parks, or new housing developments where wildlife such as deer, raccoons, opossums, skunks, and other animals may be present? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- 3** Does your dog live in an urban environment and walk through puddles or areas of pooling water after it rains? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- 4** Does your dog live in an area that experiences heavy rainfall or frequent flooding? ☐ YES ☐ NO



## ***Share your answers with your veterinarian.***

If you answered YES to any of the above questions, your dog may have a higher risk of infection and may benefit from vaccination against leptospirosis.

# 5 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOUR DOG FROM LEPTOSPIROSIS

- 1** Drain areas of standing water on your property.
- 2** Don't let your dog swim or play in slow-moving creeks or water sources where wild animals may swim, drink, or access.
- 3** Keep rodents (rats, mice, and other pests) under control.
- 4** Be aware of any changes in your dog's health or behavior. Watch for signs of leptospirosis and contact your veterinarian immediately if you see them.
- 5** **Vaccinate your dog against leptospirosis.**

