

Animal Shelter Leptospirosis Basics

What is it?

-  Leptospirosis (lepto) is a bacterial disease that affects animals and humans. It can cause liver and kidney failure in animals.
-  The disease is carried by wildlife, such as raccoons, skunks, and rats.
-  While any mammal can get lepto, it is most commonly seen in dogs.
-  Lepto is primarily spread to and from animals and people by contact with urine and urine-contaminated water.
-  While cases are seen throughout the year, they are highest in the spring and fall due to heavy rainfall.

How do I prevent it?

1. Minimize	2. Recognize	3. Report
Keep outdoor exercise areas clean, avoid attracting rats and other wildlife with any food or clutter outside the shelter.	Signs of lepto vary and are easily confused with other diseases. Diagnosis is made through blood and urine tests.	Lepto is required to be reported to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) at 800-292-3939.
Do not let dogs drink from or have contact with wet areas.	Common symptoms, if any, can include tiredness, weakness, poor appetite, fever, vomiting, thirst, increased urination, and yellowing of their skin or eyes.	This information is gathered for the sole purpose of tracking trends in the disease and creating awareness.
There is a vaccination for lepto, which is required to import dogs 12 weeks and older into a shelter.		
Wear gloves while cleaning and disinfecting. An animal may have lepto and show no signs.	Puppies and young dogs tend to be more affected.	

You have it, now what?

-  Separate sick animals from healthy ones. Make sure sick dogs have their own bowls, bedding, blankets or toys.
-  Avoid contact with infected animals' urine. Wear gloves when handling soiled bedding and toys. Clean and disinfect any indoor areas where animals urinate. Wash hands often.
-  Restrict sick animals from urinating on outside areas that are accessed by other animals and people.
-  Monitor and test any dogs that were near the sick dog(s).
-  Care for healthy dogs first to avoid spreading disease.
-  Lepto is generally treated with antibiotics and supportive care. Treating animals early increases chances for recovery.
-  Work with your veterinarian on treatment and care.