



# FACT SHEET

## Leptospirosis



Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection carried by rats and spread by their urine. It infects both dogs and humans through the gums, eyes and skin abrasions.

The bacteria can stay alive in water and moist environments.

The infection is treatable, but lack of treatment may cause liver and kidney failure and can be fatal in some cases.

### HOW DO ANIMALS GET INFECTED?

Leptospirosis is spread by the shedding of bacteria in the urine of infected mammals (such as rats). Infection occurs via:

- mucus membrane
- damaged skin or wounds
- contact with contaminated soil/water

### LEPTOSPIROSIS SYMPTOMS

Participants are encouraged to keep an eye on their greyhounds.

Symptoms in dogs include:

- lethargy and fever;
- decreased appetite;
- vomiting and abdominal pain;
- haemorrhages on the skin;
- blood in urine or no urine;
- coughing and shortness of breath;
- shivering and muscle pain;
- bleeding disorders.

### CAN IT BE PASSED ONTO HUMANS?

Leptospirosis is a zoonotic disease which means it may be spread from animals to humans. Humans can contract Leptospirosis either by direct contact with urine from infected animals, or from water, soil or food which has been contaminated by their urine. Infection in people typically causes flu-like symptoms.

### TREATMENT

Antibiotics are the main method of treatment along with supportive care of any affected organ systems.

### PREVENTION

Dogs in NSW are not typically vaccinated against Leptospirosis given that the disease is more common in tropical climates such as Queensland.

However, the vaccination is available in NSW and the Commission encourages participants to vaccinate their dogs as a preventative measure.

Two vaccinations are required, 2-4 weeks apart, followed by annual boosters which can be combined with routine annual vaccinations. Vaccinating your greyhound will also decrease the risk of human exposure.

Participants are advised to keep their greyhounds away from areas of water (such as puddles, ponds, dams etc) dispose of any food scraps and ensure kennels are free of anything that might attract rodents. Follow the advice of medical and vet practitioners if one of your greyhounds is ill.



Image one: physical sign of Lepto on muzzle



Image two: physical sign of Lepto in ear

Image source: Kate Murphy, In Practice  
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