

Pawsitive Press

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Leptospirosis

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Living in Florida, there are certain diseases our pets are at a greater risk of contracting due to our local environment. Some of our pets will also be at higher risk than others due to their home environment, social activity, breed, etc. I want to take this time to talk about something you can't see and might not have heard of...Leptospirosis.



Leptospire are very small, motile organisms known as spirochetes. They may infect animals AND humans. Animals can carry this organism without necessarily showing signs of infection. This can be dogs, raccoons, skunks, opossums, rats, cows, and pigs. These animals are considered reservoirs and because of their range, infection is seen in rural and suburban areas. Though Lepto stereotypically used to target larger, hunting type

breeds, but recent reports show a rising number of cases in toy breed dogs, even those living in condos! The number of cases diagnosed is increasing. Leptospire are transmitted in urine and pets can become infected by swimming, drinking, or walking through contaminated water. It is most commonly contracted by contact with mucous membranes (mouth, nose, and eyes) and abraded skin (cuts, etc.). Less common routes are bite wounds, transplacentally (from the mother while in the womb), and contaminated environment (soil, food, bedding, water, etc.)



Contaminated water is the highest risk factor in our area and includes creeks, ponds, lakes, standing water,

parks, etc. The organism usually reaches its highest levels in the kidney and liver, which accounts for the symptoms you as a pet owner may notice. Owners may notice lethargy, vomiting, anorexia, fever, muscle pain, a yellow coloration to the gums or eyes, and/or changes in water intake and urinary habits. Lepto can also decrease platelet levels, which can affect the ability to clot. Animals with low platelets may have bruising that looks like paintbrush strokes or pinpricks, nosebleeds, or dark stool similar to coffee grounds or tar. Pets demonstrating any of these clinical signs need to be examined by a veterinarian! Further testing will need to be done to try to determine the cause of the symptoms and whether testing for leptospirosis is indicated. There are tests and treatment options available if needed. We want to do everything we can to help protect your family pet from this contagious and potentially fatal disease.



Leptospirosis Continued

Leptospirosis is also a zoonotic disease. This means that it can be transmitted from animals to humans. This risk can be reduced by avoiding stagnant or contaminated water, washing your hands after handling contaminated water or objects contacting animal urine, and vaccinating your pet. The good news is that due to much research and development, there are vaccinations to help prevent Leptospirosis! They typically help protect against multiple bacterins, meaning multiple strains of the organism. Though it is possible there may be strains in the environment not found in the vaccine, similar to the flu having different strains, vaccinated pets are still at a much lower risk than those not vaccinated. We do recommend dogs receive the vaccine if they partake in higher risk activities and live in higher risk areas. If they have never had the vaccine before we first do a booster series consisting of two shots, three weeks apart, and we then booster them annually thereafter. Though cats and dogs are at risk, at this time cats are not routinely vaccinated because they appear to have a natural resistance.



Avoidance and appropriate sanitation are good preventative measures you can practice. Try to avoid letting your pet contact standing water that another animal could have urinated in, wildlife or domestic. Also, make sure to practice good hand washing anytime you are in contact with animal urine. The Leptospirosis vaccine is available through the Animal Hospital of Dunedin and we would be happy to discuss if your pet is at risk and if vaccination would be in the best interest for the health and well-being of your family long-term.

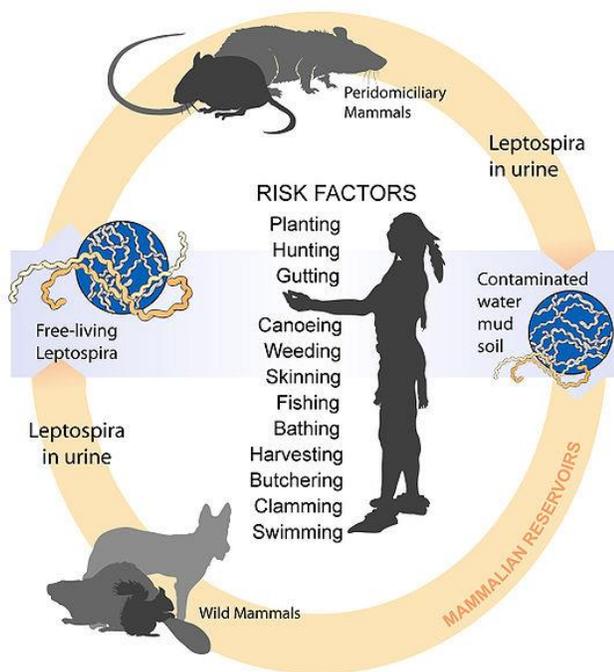


Signs and Symptoms in Pets

The clinical signs of leptospirosis vary and are nonspecific. Sometimes pets do not have any symptoms. Common clinical signs have been reported in dogs. These include:

- ✓ Fever
- ✓ Vomiting
- ✓ Abdominal pain
- ✓ Diarrhea
- ✓ Refusal to eat
- ✓ Severe weakness and depression
- ✓ Stiffness
- ✓ Severe muscle pain
- ✓ Inability to have puppies

If you think your pet may have Leptospirosis, contact your veterinarian immediately. Your veterinarian can perform tests to determine whether or not your pet has the disease.



Do you have Insurance for your Pet?

Just a few years ago, purchasing pet insurance would've been ranked right up there with purchasing life insurance for your human children. That is not the case today. With the market in pet insurance growing at an enormous rate each year, insurance for your pet has quickly become the norm for most people with furry companions. As veterinary care becomes more advanced, the costs continue to rise. Pet insurance can help make sure you'll always be able to give your pet the best care possible. Pet insurance can cover everything from vaccines to alternative medicines making the decision on what and how to treat for the pet parent much simpler and potentially less costly.

Is Pet Insurance for you and your pet?

Deciding on whether or not to purchase insurance for your pet can be a big decision. As a pet parent myself, I want to do whatever it takes to make sure my furry family is happy and healthy. But that does come at a cost. Buying pet insurance is both an emotional and economic decision that needs to be based on your personal financial situation and what you are willing to pay for peace of mind. If you get the right policy it can be an asset to the health care of your pet and have a significant impact on the bill that results from a trip to the veterinarian. You will have to do some homework to find out which policy and company works best for you and your pet's needs. Thankfully, you are often able to compare companies directly on their websites to see the plans side by side.

How does Pet Insurance Work?

Pet insurance is not like a human insurance. You pay the invoice from your veterinarian, submit the claim to your insurance company along with doctor's notes and invoices, and then wait for the reimbursement. This is pretty much the case across the board with pet insurance companies. Claims are fairly simple to complete but do require a diagnosis from the doctor and sometimes a doctor's signature. Reimbursement is generally quick and you may see a check in the mail as early as three days after submitting your claim!

If insurance is not your thing, you can always give Julie, our Patient Care Coordinator, a call and she will be happy to help you with any questions you may have regarding your policy or to submit a claim for you.

Check out these sample claims from pet parents and take a second to peruse the websites. Pet Insurance may be for you!

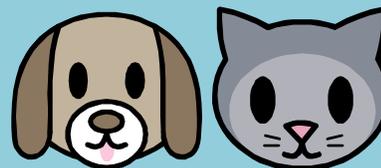
Sample Claim: <http://www.embracepetinsurance.com/claim-stories/accidents>

Suggested Pet Insurance Companies:

Embrace - <http://www.embracepetinsurance.com/>

Pet Plan - <http://www.gopetplan.com/>

VPI - <https://www.petinsurance.com/>



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