

## LEPTOSPIROSIS

### How does my pet pick up Leptospirosis?

The Leptospirosis bacteria is found in the environment, commonly in slow-moving water sources, where host species such as rodents shed the bacteria. All dogs are at risk of being exposed to Leptospirosis, especially if they have access to slow-moving water and contact with reservoir species (wild rodents) eg hunting/working dogs, farm dogs, rural dogs.

### Can it affect me?

Leptospirosis is also a zoonotic disease, which means it can spread to humans (Weil's Disease), so it is extremely important that we protect our dogs against infection.

### What are the signs of Leptospirosis?

It causes life threatening liver and kidney disease in its acute form, or more vague, non-specific signs with chronic infections. Signs of infection include fever, joint/muscle pain, vomiting and diarrhoea, lethargy and jaundice. All infected animals can shed bacteria in their urine and therefore pass it on to other in-contact animals and humans.

### What is the new vaccine for Leptospirosis?

There are several strains of this particular bacteria, known as serovars. Up until now, the vaccination used to protect against Leptospirosis has only included two of these strains.

It is now recognized that over time, different serovars have become more prevalent, so there is a need to change the way we vaccinate for this disease. The new version of the Leptospirosis vaccine protects against the four most common serovars currently encountered in the UK and Europe and there may even be some cross-protection against some of the other less common serovars.

The new vaccine is as safe as the old version, but in order to establish immunity to the new serovars, each dog will need a second dose of vaccine (4 weeks later) to ensure they are adequately primed. They then need an annual booster just as they used to with the old vaccine.

