

Leptospirosis



What is leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection known for causing both liver and kidney disease. This bacteria is found worldwide and is capable of causing serious illness in dogs, people and many other mammals. The disease is maintained in nature by several species of small mammals including raccoons, skunks, mice, shrews and opossums. Cats are susceptible to leptospirosis but symptoms are usually mild to unapparent. **Leptospirosis is now the #1 infectious cause of acute renal (kidney) failure in dogs.**

Who in the family is at risk for leptospirosis?

Previously, it was believed that cattle were the main source of infection for dogs and people. However, raccoons, skunks, mice, shrews and opossums (carriers of this disease) have become very adaptive at living in urban and suburban settings, putting people and their pets at risk for transmission of the disease. Dogs and humans are at risk for developing severe disease from exposure to the bacteria. Pets and animals with no signs of disease are also capable of passing the disease to others.



How is leptospirosis transmitted?

Leptospirosis is transmitted between dogs and from dogs to people through direct and indirect contact. Direct infection between animals occurs through contact with infected urine, bite wounds and ingestion of infected tissue. It can also occur through breeding, and can be transmitted to unborn puppies across the placenta. This can result in a miscarriage/loss of pregnancy, or the puppies can be born with the disease. Leptospirosis may be more common in kennels and other situations where dogs are crowded (dog parks, etc.). Indirect infection occurs through contact with contaminated water, soil, food or bedding. People most commonly contract the disease through contact with infected urine or contaminated water.

How do I know if my pet is infected with leptospirosis?

Young pets are more severely infected than adult pets and may die quickly without showing significant signs of the illness. The disease most often causes damage to the kidneys and may also affect the liver.

Infected pets may have fever, muscle pain, increased thirst and loss of appetite. Vomiting, diarrhea and signs of upper respiratory disease (runny nose and eyes, sneezing or coughing, trouble breathing) may also occur.

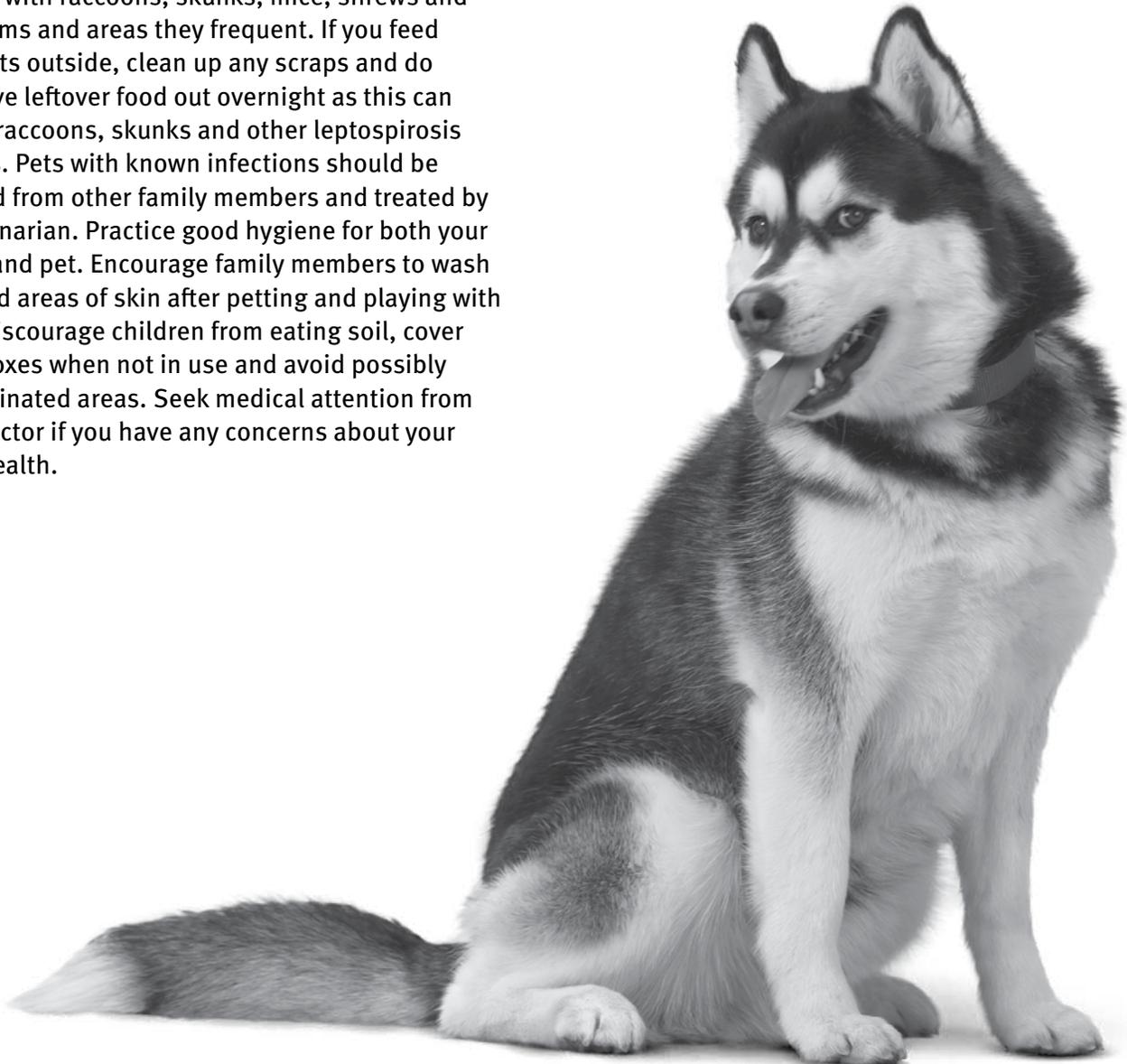
How is leptospirosis treated?

Treatment depends on the severity of disease and whether the kidneys and/or liver are involved, and may include prolonged hospitalization and IV fluid therapy, antibiotics and pain medication. Treatment for intestinal and respiratory symptoms may also be required. Even with appropriate antibiotic treatment, the leptospirosis bacteria can be shed in the urine for a long period of time. As long as the bacteria are being shed, other people, pets and animals are at risk for contracting the disease.

For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.

What can you do to protect the entire family from leptospirosis?

Vaccination of your dog is the most effective and cost-efficient strategy to protect your family and will help control this infectious disease in the pet population. No feline vaccination is available at this time. In addition to annual vaccination against leptospirosis, be aware of who your pets play with and where they are playing. Discourage or prevent contact with raccoons, skunks, mice, shrews and opossums and areas they frequent. If you feed your pets outside, clean up any scraps and do not leave leftover food out overnight as this can attract raccoons, skunks and other leptospirosis carriers. Pets with known infections should be isolated from other family members and treated by a veterinarian. Practice good hygiene for both your family and pet. Encourage family members to wash exposed areas of skin after petting and playing with pets. Discourage children from eating soil, cover sand boxes when not in use and avoid possibly contaminated areas. Seek medical attention from your doctor if you have any concerns about your pet's health.



For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.