

# LEPTOSPIROSIS

## ZOONOSES FACTSHEET

Diseases that spread from animals to people

### WHAT IS IT?

Leptospirosis is a disease caused by bacteria (germs). There are many different strains of these bacteria called *Leptospira*, all which can cause the same disease.

### HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Infected animals spread *Leptospira* bacteria in their **urine**.

Leptospirosis spreads to people from **dirty water**.

Leptospirosis is spread through urine. Worldwide, rats are the most prolific spreaders, although in Australia, the bacteria can often be found in dogs, cattle, pigs, marsupials including kangaroos and rodents including rats and mice. Urine can contaminate waterways and soil which can infect people and animals.

The people that are most commonly affected are those that work with infected animals (e.g. dairy farmers, veterinarians and other agricultural workers) but everyone is at risk if living in an infected area. The bacteria can get into the body through the mouth/eyes/nose or any other cuts in the skin. People and animals playing, drinking, washing and walking through dirty water can be infected and get sick.



### WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

**In animals:** Infected dogs may have urinary or liver issues and can have yellow gums or eyes. They may not show any signs at all.

**In people:** People can be very sick with very high fevers, kidney problems and liver problems.

### HOW CAN YOU PREVENT IT?



#### **In animals:**

- Don't let dogs or other animals drink dirty water
- Reduce rat/mice numbers - keep areas clean and put rubbish in bins
- Don't let dogs hunt pigs, kangaroos or other wildlife in Leptospirosis areas

#### **Prevention of transmission to people:**

- Practice good hygiene and wash hands with soap often
- Don't drink, swim or wash in dirty water
- Watch out for dog urine and clean up with bleach if needed (1 part bleach and 10 parts water)

If your dog has yellow eyes or a yellow mouth - **call the vet.**

If you are feeling sick - **call the health clinic.**

**For more information:** please contact AMRRIC on (08) 8948 1768, email us at [info@amrric.org](mailto:info@amrric.org) or visit our website: [www.amrric.org](http://www.amrric.org)

#### **REFERENCES**

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Phelan, S., 2010, Dog Health Programs in Indigenous Communities – an Environmental Health Practitioner's Guide, AMRRIC. <https://www.amrric.org/resources/ehp-manual/>.

Image 1:  
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