



LEPTOSPIROSIS FACT SHEET

WHAT IS LEPTOSPIROSIS?

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that affects humans and animals.

HOW DO YOU GET LEPTOSPIROSIS?

The bacteria that cause leptospirosis are spread through the urine of infected animals, which can get into water or soil and can survive there for weeks to months. Many different kinds of wild and domestic animals carry the bacterium such as cattle, pigs, horses, dogs, rodents, and wild animals. When these animals are infected, they may have no symptoms of the disease. Humans can become infected through:

- Contact with urine (or other body fluids, except saliva) from infected animals.
- Contact with water, soil, or food contaminated with the urine of infected animals.

The bacteria can enter the body through skin or mucous membranes (eyes, nose, or mouth), especially if the skin is broken from a cut or scratch. Drinking contaminated water can also cause infection.

SYMPTOMS

Some infected persons may have no symptoms at all. Symptoms may appear 2 days to 4 weeks after exposure. The illness lasts from a few days to 3 weeks or longer. Without treatment, recovery may take several months. Leptospirosis can cause a wide range of symptoms including:

- High fever
- Headache
- Chills
- Muscle aches
- Vomiting
- Jaundice
- Red eyes
- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhea
- Rash

TREATMENT

Leptospirosis is treated with antibiotics. Discuss treatment options with your doctor.

PREVENTION

- Do not swim in water that might be contaminated with animal urine
- Protective clothing or footwear should be worn by those exposed to contaminated water or soil because of their job or recreational activities.

DPHD EFFORTS

Reports of suspected and confirmed cases of disease are made to the Delaware Public Health District (DPHD). The DPHD investigates potential sources of illness, conducts surveillance for the spread of disease, and engages in community outreach and education.