

Tragically, a patient from the Fond du Lac area died at the end of February 2013 from Leptospirosis.

Leptospirosis is a bacteria that can cause illness or even death in pets, people, and wildlife. Dogs most commonly come into contact with leptospirosis (frequently shortened to "lepto") through indirect exposure to urine from infected wildlife. Dogs that swim frequently are at an especially higher risk. Raccoons, mice, deer, opossums, skunks, cattle, and pigs are among the carriers in our region. The lepto bacteria are spread through urination and can survive in puddles, bodies of water, and soil for weeks to months. An infected dog can expose family members to lepto through a small cut in the skin or through mucus membranes (eyes, oral tissue).

A "positive" leptospirosis test was recently identified in a dog in the Fond du Lac area with clinical symptoms of lepto, and unfortunately the dog died despite attempts to treat after over a week of battling the infection. It was heartbreaking for our staff and her family to watch the progression of the illness, knowing that in many cases we could have successfully prevented it. This highlights the potentially severe nature of the infection. Prevention is available through vaccination and is recommended in Wisconsin due to the prevalence of leptospirosis in our wildlife. The vaccination will not afford 100% protection because it protects against 4 of the lepto strains, while there are others that vaccination is not currently available for.

Clinical signs of leptospirosis include fever, weakness, poor appetite, and lethargy. Kidney and/or liver failure may develop which may cause additional symptoms such as vomiting, jaundice, and increased thirst and urination. Rarely, other symptoms such as meningitis (swelling around the brain) can occur. A dog that is not showing symptoms but carrying lepto can still spread the bacterial infection. If there is suspicion for infection, general lab work (CBC and Chemistry Profile) will frequently expose characteristic increases in kidney and/or liver values. A leptospirosis test on urine or blood samples can be performed to determine if the cause is the lepto bacteria.

Treatment with antibiotics has the potential to cure a leptospirosis infection, however it works best if caught early in the course of disease. Full recovery can take several weeks. Vaccination of your dog is the best method to protect your dog and your family from leptospirosis.

For more information on leptospirosis please call us at 920-269-4000 and visit the following websites:

<http://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/pets/index.htm>

<http://pets.webmd.com/dogs/canine-leptospirosis>

<http://www.leptospirosis.org/veterinary/>