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## **Leptospirosis**

Leptospira is a genus of bacteria that can cause both acute and chronic disease in dogs. It is transmitted through the urine of infected animals and remains infectious in water sources and certain types of soil. Wild mammals are a major natural host for this bacteria.

Leptospira bacteria penetrate skin or membranes that are either intact or damaged. Within a week they invade the bloodstream and quickly spread to all parts of the body. This invasion can lead to fever, anemia, and organ damage. The liver and kidneys are the most commonly damaged organs. The damage can lead to renal (kidney) or hepatic (liver) failure. As mentioned, the organism is transmitted in the urine. In severe cases, renal failure leads to death. The bacteria causes major inflammation in the blood vessels of the patient. This damage can lead to problems in other organs such as the eyes, heart, nervous system, lungs, and reproductive tract. The disease can be treated if diagnosed or suspected early.

Leptospirosis is the term used to describe disease associated with the bacteria Leptospira. This disease is found worldwide. In Illinois, the central part of the state is more known for Leptospirosis. But pockets of infections seem to occur randomly throughout the state and country and Leptospirosis is becoming more of a concern because of the difficulty associated with diagnosis as well as the sometimes high cost of treatment. Another very important aspect with Leptospirosis is the fact that the bacteria can be transmitted to people. Humans can become infected by being exposed to the same source as a dog or can contract the disease from a pet that is carrying the bacteria and shedding it in urine.

We are recommending Leptospira in our routine vaccines. As more is becoming known about this disease advances in vaccine manufacturing have produced a vaccine that we feel is both effective and safe against Leptospirosis. We carry a vaccine that contains four different types (called serovars) of Leptospira.

The vaccine is administered once and then repeated in four weeks with yearly boosters thereafter. This vaccine is recommended for all dogs whether they live in an urban or rural environment because of the increasing presence of wild mammals such as raccoons and opossums.