



LEPTOSPIROSIS IN AZ

What You Should Know and How You Can Help Protect Your Pets and Family Members

Leptospirosis is in Arizona. There are multiple strains of the *Leptospira* bacteria that can cause this disease, and can present as flu-like symptoms. Some cases have a risk of permanent kidney or liver damage, or in more severe cases pets can develop severe illness and death. Leptospirosis has been confirmed in Arizona previously, but has not been a great concern to the pets here in the past. This disease can be passed to humans and other pets, and is at a greater risk for children. There have been many confirmed cases of canine leptospirosis in the area. We as pet owners need to take the proper precautions to ensure the safety of our family members and prevent the spread of this serious infection in our area. With Arizona being a popular winter destination, and the rise in travel around the holidays, this is likely why this highly contagious Leptospirosis disease has made its way into our backyards from the neighboring states that regularly have had positive cases.

Does your dog frequent any of these places?

- **Boarding Facilities**
- **Grooming Facilities**
- **Dog Parks**
- **Pet Stores**
- **Play Dates with other Pets**
- **Training Programs**
- **Apartment Complexes or walks in Neighborhoods**
- **Travel to other States or Countries**

Your dog should be vaccinated against Leptospirosis!!

While we do not currently carry the vaccine at our facility, we highly recommend contacting your regular vet about vaccinating your dogs against leptospirosis and other contagious diseases to give your beloved pets the best possible protection. Just as with human vaccinations, the leptospirosis vaccination does not guarantee protection, but greatly boosts their immunity and protection.

What Can We Do to Prevent the Spread of Leptospirosis? How Can You Help Protect Your Pets?

Here at GQvet, it is our goal to provide a clean and sanitized facility for all of our boarding, hospitalized, and grooming pets. We ensure pets showing symptoms of contagious diseases are isolated immediately to protect healthy pets visiting our facility. This protocol, however, may not be enough to prevent an outbreak, as pets infected with leptospirosis are contagious before they start displaying symptoms. It may take 4-12 days to show symptoms, and some cases can be infected with no symptoms. Vaccinating will help provide protection to your beloved pets. This virus is transmitted via contact with infected urine, water, soil, or a bite from an infected animal, and is transferable between species and to humans.

The *Leptospira* bacteria are very dependent on moisture to survive. The virus can remain viable (alive and able to infect) on dry surfaces, hands, and clothing for up to 48 hours unless disinfected. The bacteria can live in standing water, mud, or damp soil for over one month.

Canine Vaccination Administration:

It is recommended by the vaccine manufacturers and doctors to vaccinate your dog against all 4 of the main strains of leptospirosis with our vaccine to ensure the optimum protection of your pet.

Vaccines should always be given under the supervision of a veterinarian, and a booster leptospirosis vaccination should be administered 3 weeks after the initial vaccine. Your pet is considered as protected as possible two weeks after the booster vaccination is administered. The Leptospirosis vaccines should then be repeated annually after the initial vaccinations for maximum protection.

Symptoms of Leptospirosis

Some pets may be infected but not show symptoms. The clinical symptoms of Leptospirosis are flu-like, and can include fever, shivering, muscle tenderness or stiffness, increased thirst and urination, vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, reduced appetite, jaundice, and/ or ocular discharge and inflammation of the eyes. More severe cases can develop kidney or liver failure, lung disease and/or difficulty breathing, bleeding disorders, blood in vomit, stool, urine, or saliva, nosebleeds, bleeding in the gums, or fluid accumulation in the legs, chest, or abdomen, or even death.

How Long Is My Pet Contagious to Others If Infected with Leptospirosis?

From the time of exposure, to onset of clinical signs, the incubation period is usually 4 to 12 days. Shedding of the leptospira bacteria in urine can occur for months after treatment; therefore, animals can be contagious for months from the time of infection. Due to leptospirosis being contagious to humans and other species, you should wear gloves when handling urine from infected animals, and always wash your hands after handling an infected animal. Avoid areas with standing water, moist grass or soil, or high traffic areas for animals. Do not allow your pet to drink or swim in any standing water such as ponds or lakes. Confine your pet to an easily sanitized area, avoid contact with other pets, and only allow your pet to urinate away from water sources or areas that humans or other animals will have access to.

Are Certain Pets More Susceptible to Infection Than Others?

It is believed that all dogs that are exposed are most commonly infected with the disease. Non-symptomatic animals can still shed the disease and can spread the infection. It is proven that all dogs, regardless of breed or age, are considered highly susceptible to leptospirosis and have no immunity when first exposed to the leptospira bacteria, especially if not vaccinated.

Leptospirosis infection has been found in cats, however is found to be more mild in them compared to dogs. There are currently no vaccinations available for felines. Leptospirosis can affect farm animals, such as pigs, cattle, and horses, as well as wildlife animals such as rats, raccoons, and deer.

Diagnosis & Treatment

Physical examination and exposure history can help us to suspect a leptospirosis infection; however, many of the signs and symptoms of leptospira can be similar with other diseases. In house blood testing and urinalysis can help guide us to the warning signs of Leptospirosis within an hour of obtaining a sample. Canine Leptospirosis can be specifically diagnosed by outside laboratories by performing a PCR (bacterial blood testing) requiring a blood and urine sample. Results can be reported for this test in 3 to 4 days.

As leptospirosis is a disease caused by infection with leptospira bacteria, treatment is available via antibiotics and supportive care. In more severe cases, hospitalization requiring IV fluids and nutritional therapy may be necessary to prevent or treat dehydration, as well as medications to assist with vomiting, diarrhea, and/or appetite stimulation. Immune system support supplements may also be used to aid in the healing and comfort of the pet. More extreme cases may require oxygen therapy, kidney dialysis, or other intensive care. There is always a risk of permanent kidney or liver disease. Sick or exposed dogs will need to be isolated for up to several weeks post-treatment, and proper sanitation protocols should be followed while handling these pets as well as cleaning of their urine.

The Gilbert Queen Creek Emergency Veterinarian is here to serve all of your pet's health care needs. Our courteous staff knows that your pet is a family member and we strive to make them feel at home in our warm, caring environment. All of our patients are treated as if they were one of our own. Your pet's health and well-being are our priority. With this in mind, we offer only the best care for

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