

CLIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

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LEPTOSPIROSIS

Overview

Leptospirosis is a disease caused by one of several species of *Leptospira*, a bacteria than can affect animals and humans (zoonotic). The disease can be acute producing several clinical signs or chronic. Pregnant females often abort when infected.

Species and Animal Groups Affected

All animal species including humans can be affected by leptospirosis. The most commonly affected species are dogs, cat, cattle, camelids, goats, pigs and water buffalo. Several wildlife species are infected and represent a source of infection for domestic animals.

The type of bacteria can be very adapted to a particular animal species.

Signs

Acute infections can result in fever, depression and loss of appetite. Females of breeding age may experience abortion or poor conception rate. Some animals may show other signs such as specific inflammation in the eye (uveitis) and kidney disease with bloody or brown urine. Jaundice may also be observed in affected animals.

Causes

Bacteria belonging to the genus of *Leptospira*. There are more than 200 types of *Leptospira*. The exact species of *Leptospira* depends on the species of animals.

Risk Factors

Transmission of leptospirosis is usually by direct contact with contaminated fluids or tissues such as urine, vaginal discharges, fetus, and placenta. Stagnant water with contaminate waste from infected animal is a source of infection.

The bacteria is maintained longer in an environment that is hot and humid.

Treatment

Infected animals are generally treated with appropriate antibiotics for a specific duration. Severely affected animals may require more intensive treatment such as blood transfusion, intravenous fluid and other supportive care.

Management Considerations

Prevention of the disease is key. This can be accomplished by vaccination and excellent biosecurity measures.

Vaccines are available and are species specific.

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Blackwell's 5-Minute Veterinary Consult: Ruminant 2nd Ed.

Control of wildlife, rodents and contaminated water sources is helpful.

Identification of shedding animals and their culling or treatment.

It is important to take precaution when handling animals that are suspected to have leptospirosis as it is a dangerous zoonotic disease

Expected Course and Prognosis

Prognosis for the life of the animal is good if the disease is diagnosed and treated early

Untreated cases may develop severe kidney failure.

Animals may become carrier, shed the bacteria and contaminate humans and other animals.

Notes

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