

Leptospirosis

Occupational Bacterial Infection from Handling Rodents

What is Leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis, also known as swamp fever, is a bacterial infection from various types of bacteria with the genus *Leptospira*. It is found worldwide and mainly transfers to people through rodents, however horses, ruminants, swine, and dogs can also become infected.

How does infection occur?

Infection can be transmitted during direct contact with an infected animal, breathing in contaminated particles, or from an infected animal's urine. Consuming food or water that has been contaminated by urine or feces from an infected animal is another way someone may become infected.

What are the symptoms?

After exposure it can take up to a week before any symptoms to appear. Signs range from asymptomatic to severe. Mild symptoms include fever, headaches, body aches, vomiting, and jaundice. Severe cases can have damage to the kidneys, liver, or the central nervous system.

How do I prevent it?

Do not touch any wild rodents. Store animal feed in a rodent-proof container. If handling an infected animal, wear appropriate PPE such as gloves, eye protection, gown, and a mask. Wash hands after handling rodents or other potentially contaminated materials.

How is it treated?

Leptospirosis can be treated with supportive care and antibiotics can be used if the case is severe.

Resources used:

- The Center for Food Security and Public Health Zoonotic Disease Factsheets: Leptospirosis
- The Center for Food Security and Public Health Zoonotic Transmission Routes: Leptospirosis
- Merck Manual Veterinary Manual: Leptospirosis in Animals - Overview
- Chapter 28, Selected Zoonoses, (2015) *Lab Animal Medicine*, 3rd ed.
- List of Zoonoses (2016) *Merck Veterinary Manual* 11th ed.