



Canine Leptospirosis: Sydney outbreak update

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Many of our pet owners may be aware of a recent case of Leptospirosis in Elanora on the Northern Beaches. The majority of canine leptospirosis cases since 2019 have been from dogs living in or visiting the Inner City and Inner West areas of Sydney.

What is leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection that lives in our rat population. Dogs can become infected by eating diseased rats or drinking water contaminated with rat urine. It is extremely unlikely for your dog to catch Leptospirosis from general contact with other dogs. While the number of cases in Sydney is low, this is a serious disease with a high mortality rate in dogs and is a zoonotic disease (meaning it can spread to people).

Should I vaccinate my dog against leptospirosis?

Turrumurra Veterinary Hospital currently recommends that vaccination for Leptospirosis is performed on an individual risk assessment basis as per the guidelines released by the research team at the University of Sydney.

Vaccination at this stage is advised for any dog in the following situations

- Dogs that visit the **Northern Beaches** (including Bayview dog beach, Narrabeen/Warriewood lagoon) or the **Inner City (including Lower North Shore) and Inner West**
- Dogs travelling to **country and rural** areas, especially with the current mouse plague
- If your dog regularly goes **swimming**, drinks from **puddles** or has contact with **rats** then we would also advise vaccination

If your dog is an Upper North Shore local, who does not leave the immediate area, then at this stage the risk appears very low, though some clients still prefer to vaccinate their dog for peace of mind.

How do I have my dog vaccinated against Leptospirosis at Turrumurra Vet Hospital?

Dogs require two vaccinations, 2-4 weeks apart to provide protection then an annual booster. If you would like to have your dog vaccinated, it can be done at the same time as their regular vaccinations, or if these are not due soon, the vaccination can be performed separately.

What are the symptoms of leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis in dogs can present initially with lethargy, vomiting, diarrhoea and fever. Following this, more severe disease including kidney failure and liver disease occurs. Unfortunately, there is a high fatality rate even with appropriate treatment.

As the Sydney leptospirosis outbreak is an evolving situation, our recommendations may change, and updates will be provided to our clients as required.