



ARKLE Veterinary Care, LLC
1020 Concord Rd., SE • Smyrna, GA 30080
Phone: (770) 435-6700 • Fax: (770) 434-4863
www.arklevetcare.com • arklevetcare@bellsouth.net

Leptospirosis Information

We offer vaccination against Leptospirosis (Lepto) for dogs. There are reasons why we offer it as an 'elective' vaccination. The following is information that you should read to decide if you elect to have this vaccine given to your pet.

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease of uncommon occurrence in both humans and animal. Leptospirosis is transmitted between animals through contact with infected urine; venereal and placental transfer; bite wounds; or the ingestion of infected tissue. Typically, we think of the disease being spread by small furry animals such as rodents and raccoons but some forms of Lepto can be spread through livestock such as horses and cattle. Indirect transmission occurs through exposure of susceptible animals to contaminated water sources, food, or even bedding. Stagnant or slow moving water provides a suitable habitat for *Leptospira*. As a result, disease outbreaks often increase during periods of flooding. In dry areas, infections are more common around water sources. Freezing greatly reduces the survival of the organism in the environment. This explains why infections are more common in summer and fall and why the infection is more prevalent in temperate areas like Georgia.

Leptospirosis can cause significant illness and even death. It can cause kidney failure and/or liver disease. Since Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection, it can be treated if caught early enough. However, diagnosis of the disease can be difficult. If your pet becomes infected, there is greater risk of infection for you and other people he/she comes in contact with. Cats seem to be more resistant to infection with Lepto.

In the past, Lepto was commonly included in combination vaccinations. For various reasons, many veterinarians stopped using the vaccination over the last 10 years. The main reason was that Lepto was found to be related to increased vaccine reactions. Vaccine reactions could be mild 'hives' and facial swellings to life threatening anaphylaxis. Although occurrence of Leptospirosis is still uncommon, the incidence is now on the rise. In my experience, dachshunds and smaller dogs have vaccine reactions more often than larger dogs. I also feel that larger dogs and dogs that spend more time outside have an increased risk of exposure and therefore are at greater risk of infection with Leptospirosis. University of Georgia's College of Veterinary Medicine Community Clinic is recommending vaccination against Lepto for all but for all but strictly indoor dogs with limited exposure to wildlife urine or slow running outside water/ponds/creeks, regardless of breed. For known vaccine reactors, pretreatment to decrease or eliminate the risk of serious reaction is given.

If you choose to have your dog vaccinated, we will complete 2 vaccinations 3-4 weeks apart. The dog needs to be at least 10 weeks old to start the series. The immunity derived from these 2 vaccinations may last for 6 or more months. The protection offered will vary with each individual pet. Currently we are offering the initial 2 vaccines, and then plan on yearly boosters.