

CANINE LEPTOSPIROSIS: UPDATES IN RECOMMENDATIONS & CLINICAL PRESENTATION

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OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUE

Leptospirosis is one of the most exciting re-emerging pathogens in the USA. In fact, in the last 10 years, research indicates that the old dogma regarding risk of leptospirosis infection has been reversed. For example, recent investigations indicate that a risk factor for infection is a dog living in an urban area, rather than a rural dwelling dog as was historically thought to be at bigger risk. Additionally, small breed dogs have been identified as being at greater risk as well. Because of the zoonotic risk of leptospirosis, and the possibility of dogs becoming carriers, effective client communication and timely definitive diagnostics are important for regular practitioners to embrace. Diagnostic options for leptospirosis include culture and antibody titer. However, as the initial presenting symptoms of leptospirosis are those of a simple urinary tract infection and most first-line empirical antibiotics are effective, most clinicians do not perform diagnostics. The advent of benchtop testing in recent years has made the option of definitive diagnosis more reasonable in regular practice. Newly updated recommendations from ACVIM should be an impetus to re-examine how practitioners and clinical protocols address the ongoing threat of leptospirosis.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENTATION

1. Describe risk factors for leptospirosis infection in dogs
2. Describe the risk-based assessment for leptospirosis vaccination in dogs
3. List sources of leptospirosis infection for the average dog
4. Recognize the importance of effective client communication about zoonotic diseases

SUMMARY INCLUDING 5 KEY “TAKE HOME” POINTS

1. Leptospirosis is a real infectious disease issue facing companion animals
2. Leptospirosis vaccination should be performed based on a risk assessment for each animal
3. Presenting symptoms of leptospirosis could mimic a simple urinary tract infection
4. Effective communication with veterinary practice staff and clients regarding zoonotic disease is important
5. Current ACVIM guidelines state, “Leptospirosis vaccines should be administered annually to all dogs starting at 12 weeks of age.”

References/Suggested Reading

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