

LEPTOSPIROSIS



What is leptospirosis?

There are two types of Leptospirosis infection which affect workers in the UK.

- **Weil's Disease**
A serious and sometimes fatal infection that is transmitted to humans by contact with urine from infected rats.
- **The Hardjo form of Leptospirosis**
Transmitted from cattle to humans.



What are the symptoms?

Both diseases start with a flu-like illness with a persistent and severe headache.

Who is at risk?

Anyone is at risk who is exposed to rats, rat or cattle urine or to fetal fluids from cattle.

Farmers are now the main group at risk from both Weil's disease and cattle Leptospirosis. However, those in contact with sewage, canal and river water must also take precautions.

How are you at risk?

The bacteria can enter your body through cuts and scratches and through the lining of the mouth, throat and eyes after contact with infected urine, or contaminated water, such as in sewers, ditches, ponds and slow flowing rivers and canals. Rat urine may also contaminate animal feed stuff on farms.

How to prevent infection

- Don't touch rats with unprotected hands. Cover all cuts and broken skin with waterproof plasters before and during work.
- Wear the protective clothing provided.
- It is important to wash your hands after handling any animal, any contaminated clothing or other materials, and always before eating, drinking or smoking (if you must).

What else can you do?

If you are ill visit your doctor and tell him/her about your work and show him/her this leaflet.

For the information of the doctor

Your patient's work may expose him/her to the danger of Leptospirosis (either *L icterohaemorrhagiae* or *L hardjo*). Early diagnosis and treatment are vital in Weil's disease as jaundice is often absent in the early stages. The illness in *L hardjo* may also be greatly shortened by appropriate antibiotic treatment. (Your local PHLS will be able to offer advice and serological testing.)

You or your doctor can get further information from

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