



## Leptospirosis

### Cause

Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection. It is spread from infected animals in urine, and can also survive in watercourses contaminated by infected urine. The bacteria gains entry to the body through cuts and abrasions in the skin, and also by absorbing through the membranes of the eyes, mouth and nose. It then moves around the body in the blood stream before setting up infection in the body organs.

Leptospirosis affects a large range of mammals, from cows to dogs, rats to humans. Infection in humans is a very real hazard and is due to direct contact with urine from infected animals. Symptoms initially may be lingering flu-like symptoms with severe headaches, and if untreated may lead to life-threatening conditions such as meningitis, kidney failure and jaundice. Any background infection in the herd poses a threat to yourself, your staff and your family!

### Clinical Signs

Leptospirosis primarily causes reproductive problems. These include poor conception rates, poor PD results, longer return to service and an extended calving index.

Abortion is also often associated with Leptospirosis, and can occur at any stage in pregnancy. Infected cows may also have weaker calves and increased incidence of retained cleansing. Udder infection leads to milk drop (up to a third of the yield) and a flabby bag affecting all quarters. Milk can become very thick and will have a high cell count.

The kidneys are also infected, producing contaminated urine. In long standing cases this can lead to kidney failure.

### Diagnosis & Treatment

The easiest way to confirm Leptospirosis within the herd is through a bulk milk sample test.. Diagnosis and further investigation can also be confirmed with blood samples of suspect animals within the herd.

Treatment of infected animals is through the use of high dose penicillin and streptomycin for several days.

### Prevention

Prevention is always better than cure. Use of a good vaccination programme avoids use of antibiotics, expensive milk withdrawal times and production losses.

Our recommended vaccine is Leptavoid-H (Schering-Plough Animal Health) given at two 2ml doses 4-6 weeks apart with annual vaccination thereafter. The best time to vaccinate is at spring turn out, and can be given in calves 5 months and older. New and bought-in animals should also be vaccinated and kept isolated from the rest of the herd until one week after the second vaccination.

Please contact us at the practice if you think Leptospirosis may be a problem in your herd, or you want further information on the disease.