

Veterinarian cautions pet owners of disease affecting both pets and humans

May 14 2014, by Lindsey Elliott

Due to recent storms and flooding, a Kansas State University veterinarian is warning of a disease that spreads through water to both dogs and people.

"The most important thing about leptospirosis is it's a zoonotic disease, so [dogs](#) can transmit the disease to people," said Ken Harkin, professor and section head of small animal internal medicine at Kansas State University's Veterinary Health Center.

Harkin helped develop a test to identify leptospirosis, a [bacterial disease](#) that can result in kidney failure and can be fatal in dogs. It is a worldwide disease that usually appears in periodic outbreaks. The disease is spread through the urine of wild and domestic animals and is usually found in creeks, lakes or floodwater. Harkin says dogs and their owners can be exposed from the same source.

"A few years ago, we had a client who brought her dog in here with leptospirosis because her front yard had flooded and the raccoons had contaminated the yard," Harkin said. "Both the husband and the dog ended up in the hospital. He had leptospirosis and so did the dog. They both got it from the water in the front yard that was contaminated with leptospirosis from the raccoons."

The symptoms, which are similar for humans and dogs, include joint pain, weakness, vomiting and possibly jaundice. Dogs may exhibit excessive drinking and urination, which is a sign of [kidney failure](#).

Harkin recommends getting your dog vaccinated for [leptospirosis](#) if it is prevalent in your area. Medications are available for dogs and humans if they are infected with the disease.

Provided by Kansas State University

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