

MEDIA RELEASE

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Companion Animal Network Australia urges dog owners to watch out for symptoms for deadly bacterial disease



Following recent veterinary reports of exposure to a deadly bacterial disease in NSW and NT, leading animal welfare charity Companion Animal Network Australia (Australia CAN) is urging pet owners to be cautious when out and about with their dog and watch for signs of leptospirosis infection.

Leptospirosis is a zoonotic disease (affecting both animals and humans) caused by bacteria found specifically in infected animal tissues and urine. Infection with *Leptospira* bacteria may cause liver and kidney damage; however, it can also affect the nervous and respiratory systems, and in extreme cases cause death, according to the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA).

“After weeks of wet weather – with more on the way – and an ongoing mouse plague, we remind pet owners of the risk of leptospirosis as the bacteria can live in water, soil or mud or be carried by rodents,” says Trish Ennis, CEO of Australia CAN.

Australia CAN promotes the human animal bond and responsible pet ownership through national campaigns, partnerships and initiatives. It also represents the companion animal welfare work of [six member agencies](#) that provide rescue, shelter, re-homing, fostering, health care and enrichment services to more than 50,000 animals every year.

Last month, Northern Territory Health Director of the Centre for Disease Control, Dr Vicki Krause, announced known hotspots for leptospirosis exposure in the Fogg Dam and Harrison Dam areas in Greater Darwin, rural Darwin, the Katherine district, Finniss River, Tipperary, Daly River and Gunbalanya¹.

Cases of leptospirosis have also been recently detected in NSW’s Hunter region, Marrickville and the Northern Beaches², claiming two dogs in Sydney and leaving another critically ill.

Outdoor activities with your dog such as walking, camping and swimming may increase the risk of infection. The bacteria can enter a dog’s body via cuts or abrasions on the skin, or through mucous membranes in the mouth, nose or eyes, according to the AVA.

Symptoms of leptospirosis may include vomiting, diarrhea, inappetence, jaundice, lethargy, changed frequency of urination and bleeding. A vaccine is available to prevent leptospirosis. For advice around vaccination and additional preventative measures to reduce the risk of infection, please contact your veterinarian.

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About Companion Animal Network Australia (Australia CAN)

Companion Animal Network Australia (Australia CAN) is a registered charity representing the companion animal welfare work of our six member agencies. We rally support to develop and promote programs that deliver high welfare standards for companion animals. Together, our members provide rescue, shelter, re-homing, fostering, health care and enrichment services to more than 50,000 animals every year. Through national campaigns, partnerships and initiatives, we celebrate the human-animal bond and promote responsible pet ownership. We use our national voice to campaign for the humane treatment of all companion animals and we rally support for programmes that deliver high welfare standards. To discover more, visit www.australiacan.org.au

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