

Leptospirosis: a risk for those working with animals

Leptospirosis (lepto) is an infectious disease commonly spread from animals to people and between animals by infected urine or urine contaminated water and environments.



Are you at risk?

People who work in close contact with animals and are exposed to their urine, body fluids or flesh, are at high risk, especially in wet environments. The bacteria enter your body through cuts in your skin or through the inside surfaces of your nose, mouth and eyes.

High-risk jobs include:

farmers, farm service workers, abattoir and meat processing workers, and people who work near possibly contaminated environments, such as plumbers, sewer workers, miners and drain layers.

Sickness from lepto usually starts with mild flu-like symptoms but can be much more severe and result in hospitalisation, long-term illness, or even death.

Protect yourself



Avoid urine splashes.

Use personal protective equipment (PPE) that provides an infection barrier such as aprons, safety glasses or a face shield, and waterproof gloves and boots.



Cover cuts and grazes with waterproof, sterilising bandages.



Wash your hands regularly with water, soap and disinfectant.

Wash your hands before and after using the toilet, touching animals, eating, drinking, smoking or vaping.



Feeling sick? Symptoms

Fever, high temperatures, headache, muscle pain, chills/sweating, weakness /nausea

These symptoms can be mistaken for the flu (influenza) and usually start within 2 to 14 days of exposure, but it could be up to 30 days before you have symptoms.



If you have symptoms

If you develop symptoms, contact your GP or healthcare provider ASAP, and let them know lepto may be the cause. You can also call Healthline on 0800 611 116 anytime 24/7 for free health advice and information about what to do next. In an emergency call 111.

WorkSafe must be notified as soon as possible after a case of leptospirosis is identified