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Rural Women New Zealand heads fundraising campaign to fight Leptospirosis

"In the first week I thought I would die, and then I wished I had. It took a whole year out of my life, and the worst thing about it is, once you've got it, it doesn't go away" - Pig Farmer who caught Leptospirosis

RWNZ says fight not over yet

News that a meatworker died recently of Leptospirosis has led to the revival of a fundraising campaign by Rural Women New Zealand to help fight the disease.

During the 1970s this debilitating illness was largely the concern of dairy and pig farmers, with 875 cases reported in 1974.

Following a major campaign in the '70s and '80s by RWNZ to fund research into the disease, vaccines were developed for cattle and pigs, and risk reduction strategies for farmers were introduced.

The number of cases reported is now far fewer than in the 1970s, but there is still work to be done. Leptospirosis remains NZ's most important occupational infectious disease, and it is poorly controlled compared with other developed countries, with meat workers now most at risk.

Funds raised will go to Massey University's EpiCentre to help fund further research into managing this disease.

Please support RWNZ's
Leptospirosis
Fundraising Campaign

Your donation will go to Massey University's EpiCentre Research Unit

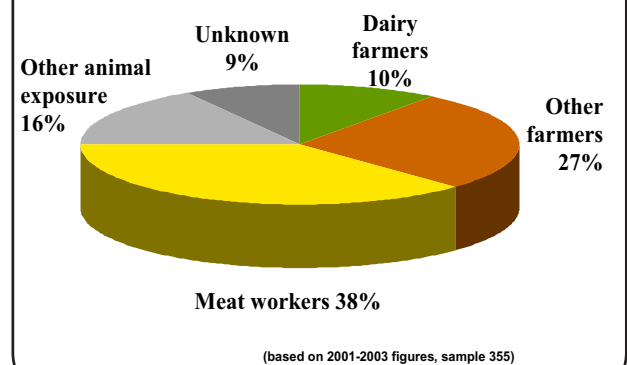
Lepto - The Symptoms

Lepto can be diagnosed, but not easily. The symptoms are similar to 'flu, but can be much more severe. A blood test is required for positive diagnosis, but antibodies will not be present for two or three weeks. Symptoms may include:

- * **Dreadful headaches**, severe and persistent;
- * **High fever**, sometimes hallucinations or nightmares,
- * **Sensitivity to light**;
- * **Sweating, nausea** and / or vomiting;
- * **Muscle pain**; back pain;
- * **Loss of appetite**, mood changes
- * **Jaundice** (yellow eyes or skin, due to liver damage);
- * **Breathing problems**, vision problems, diarrhoea, skin problems.

Leptospirosis can strike very rapidly. 45% of those affected are hospitalised. In severe cases there can be permanent complications, most commonly kidney failure. Some patients suffer chronic Leptospirosis, with repeat hospital admissions and recurring bouts of symptoms over many years.

Who is getting Leptospirosis?



How is Leptospirosis caught?

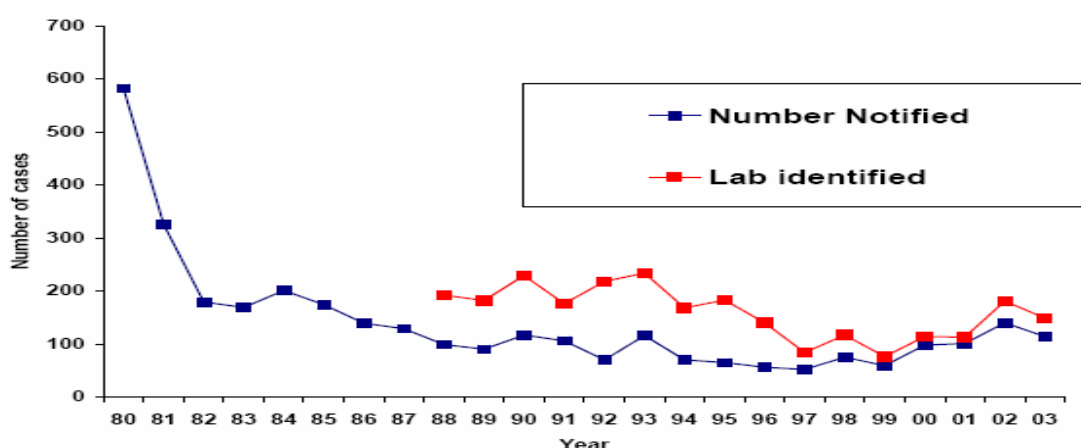
Lepto is caused by bacteria that can infect people and almost all mammals.

The Leptospira live in the kidneys but are 'shed' in the urine. Humans are easily infected by contact with infected animal urine. Many animals are infected without symptoms.

The Leptospira enter the human body through cuts and cracks in the skin, e.g. through bare hands or feet, or through the membranes of the eyes, nose and mouth.

Disease control in cattle and pigs has improved. However 10% of dairy farmers are not vaccinating. All stock need regular, well timed vaccinations.

Lepto is now emerging in sheep and deer, resulting in lamb and weaner losses.



Lepto 2 Way

Lepto 3 Way



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