

Curbing spread of leptospirosis

WORLD Veterinary Day was designated by the World Veterinary Association (WVA) in 2000 to be celebrated annually on the last Saturday of April which is today.

The theme for 2015 is “Vector-borne zoonotic diseases,” which are infections that are transmitted via a vector between animals and humans. This theme falls under the concept of One Health, which emphasises the close relationship among animals, humans and the environment

Veterinarians play key roles in identifying and treating zoonotic diseases and therefore, in safeguarding public health. In keeping with the theme, the Trinidad and Tobago Veterinary Association (TTVA) intends to publish an article of public health significance.

Today features focuses on the disease called leptospirosis. It is a disease that can affect humans and animals, including your pets. All animals (wild and domesticated) can potentially become infected with leptospirosis. The bacteria that causes leptospirosis is spread through the urine of infected animals, which can get into water or soil and can survive there for weeks to months. Humans and animals can become infected through contact with this contaminated urine (or other body fluids, except saliva), water, or soil. The bacteria can enter the body through skin or mucous membranes (eyes, nose, or mouth), especially if the skin is broken from a cut or scratch. Drinking contaminated water can also cause infection. Infected wild and domestic animals may continue to excrete the bacteria into the environment continuously or every once in a while, for a few months or up to several years.

Signs to observe in your pets:

- Fever
- Vomiting (bloody)



REDUCING the rodent populations in your yard and preventing pets from drinking stagnant pools of water will prevent the spread of leptospirosis.

- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhoea
- Refusal to eat
- Severe weakness and depression
- Jaundice (yellow skin, eyes, gums)
- Bloody urine
- Muscle and joint pain

The disease can be treated successfully if caught early. Blood and urine are evaluated as the bacteria damages liver and kidneys. Treatment involves hospitalisation of the patient to administer intravenous fluids and antibiotics. The risk of leptospirosis can be reduced by vaccinating your pet annually at your local TTVA vet. In addition, reducing the rodent populations in your yard and preventing pets from drinking stagnant pools of water will further prevent the spread of the disease. If you suspect your animal has the disease based on the above signs, visit your TTVA vet as soon as possible.

Human beings can also become infected with leptospirosis, so handle dogs suspected of having the disease with care (wear gloves). Adhere to good hygiene tech-

niques, such as frequent hand-washing and avoiding contact with potentially contaminated urine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that leptospirosis may occur in humans in two phases:

- after the first phase (with fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, vomiting, or diarrhoea) the patient may recover for a time but become ill again.
- if a second phase occurs, it is more severe; the person may have kidney or liver failure or meningitis. This phase is also called Weil's disease.

If you have been exposed to an infected animal and become ill, please seek medical assistance without delay.

To learn more about other diseases and methods for promoting good health and welfare for humans and animals, please come with your pets on a leash to the San Antonio Green Market, Saddle Road, Santa Cruz today from 6 am to midday, where the TTVA will be celebrating with educational segments, displays and free giveaways.

Lashleys raise funds for children's home

By ANGELA PIDDUCK

Abdulah and Leroy's sister Lystra Lashlev, it was decided to raise

founder of the Miami Carnival which started in 1985.