

Health and Safety Advice Sheet Number1

Leptospirosis (Weil's Disease)

Leptospirosis, a prescribed disease under the Industrial Injuries Act, is caused by an organism found notably in rats and cows [although similar organisms occur in other animals] and is passed in their urine.

Work in any situation where there is likely to be contamination by rat or cow urine presents a particular risk of infection.

Specific precautions and measures to be adopted are outlined below.

Precautions to be taken to prevent risk of infection

- After contact with any material or surface that may have been contaminated, wash your hands, forearms and face thoroughly with soap and water. If your clothes or boots could have been contaminated, wash thoroughly after handling. It is particularly important to do this before taking any food, drink or before smoking. Wet protective clothing, after thorough cleaning in an appropriate manner, should be dried as soon as possible.
- Infection may also enter through breaks in the skin, so thorough first aid treatment of all wounds is important. Take particular care to wash thoroughly any cut, scratch, or abrasion of the skin as soon as possible, whether the injury was caused at work or not. Apply an antiseptic to the wound and completely cover it with a waterproof plaster. Antiseptic gauze and waterproof plasters are available on site.
- If you suffer any cut, scratch or abrasion of the skin, it must be cleaned and covered with a waterproof plaster before commencing work.
- Avoid rubbing your nose, mouth or eyes with your hands during work.
- Always practice good hygiene procedures before eating, drinking, smoking and on completion of work.
- Report any evidence or sighting of vermin to site management.

Please also ensure that all food and food waste is removed to the appropriate container

DO NOT DISCARD FOOD ON SITE OR IN SITE WASTE SKIPS

Symptoms

The disease can be serious if not treated early and starts with flu-like illness with a persistent and severe headache. If you are at work and experience similar symptoms report to site management immediately. When not at work and you experience the above contact your doctor and inform him/her that you are working on a site that may bring you into contact with leptospira.