

Toolbox Talk Details

Title	B06 - Leptospirosis (Weil's disease)
Reason	Actions must be taken to avoid the presence of rats on site. Leptospirosis can be fatal. Do not become a statistic.
Outline	This talk covers the effects and symptoms of leptospirosis, the measures you should take to avoid it and who could be at risk.

What is Leptospirosis?

1. Leptospirosis, which is also known as Weil's disease, is an infection that can be passed from animals to humans.
2. The disease enters the body through breaks in the skin and through the lining of the mouth and nose.
3. It is caused by contact with rat urine or water contaminated by the urine of rats and other small mammals.
4. It starts as a mild illness and it can be easily cured if treated early enough.
5. If left untreated it becomes more serious and can cause jaundice and liver and kidney damage. In extreme cases it can be fatal.
6. The initial symptoms are like flu (such as headaches, chills and muscle pains), so it is possible that you could ignore the symptoms or be treated for the wrong illness.

Who is at risk?

1. Workers in areas that show evidence of rat infestation are classed as being at high risk. In general, all workers should be aware of the dangers of leptospirosis and take added precautions on refurbishment and demolition projects.
2. Also at risk are operatives who work regularly in or near water, such as those engaged in:
 - work on sewers and other drainage systems
 - work on canals and similar conservation projects
 - tunnelling work

What can you do about it?

1. Do not encourage the presence of vermin. Carefully dispose of waste food, especially on sites that are wet or adjacent to rivers and lakes.
2. Do not handle the carcasses of dead rats or other small mammals.
3. Cover all cuts and abrasions with a waterproof dressing and wear appropriate protective clothing.
4. If you frequently work near water, carry a card or tag saying that you may be at risk of catching the disease.
5. Exercise good hygiene by washing hands before preparing or eating food and taking meals and drinks away from site areas that may attract vermin.
6. Be aware that you can catch the disease if you get water in your mouth and nose after falling into a watercourse.
7. See your doctor immediately if you think you are infected.

Revision Date	Assessed By	Signature
January 2021	Michael Reddan	