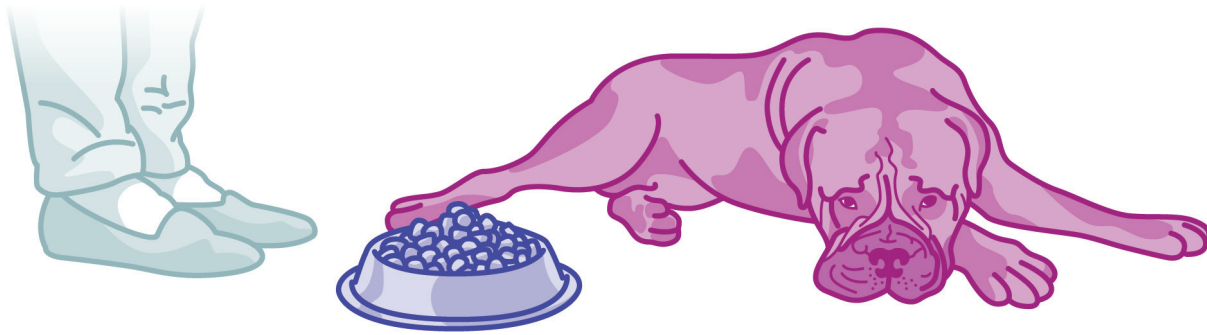PETS + US®

CLAIM OF THE MONTH

LEPTOSPIROSIS

Pet: : Leo*, a 2-year-old neutered male English Mastiff

A TYPICAL LEPTOSPIROSIS STORY:

Despite his young age, Leo is already known to be a pretty relaxed dog. He's a big fan of his naps, but breakfast is the one thing that can always get him moving quickly. One morning this fall, he was particularly quiet and sleepy, and had no interest in his food at chow time. He remained remarkably lethargic through the morning, and his family became alarmed when he started vomiting and urinating excessively around lunch time.

A call to the vet's office secured an appointment later that day. Leo's family veterinarian noticed that his abdomen seemed quite painful. He was running a fever and was mildly dehydrated. A set of blood and urine tests were performed on-site in the clinic. They revealed significant elevations in liver and kidney values, and inflammatory cells. These findings suggested a serious problem. Leo would need to be admitted to a 24-hour hospital for further investigation and intensive care.

At the specialty hospital, additional tests were run, and it was discovered that Leo had contracted leptospirosis.

ABOUT THE CONDITION: LEPTOSPIROSIS

Leptospirosis is a serious infectious disease caused by strains of the bacteria "Leptospira." Dogs contract the disease when they contact wet ground or water contaminated by the urine of infected domestic animals and wildlife. Because the bacteria are susceptible to sunlight and desiccation, infections are more common in the spring or fall when the ground is wet and fallen leaves shelter the water.

A leptospirosis infection usually causes fever, lethargy, and abdominal pain. It can damage the liver, kidneys, lungs, and even eyes. Even more concerningly, it can be spread to humans when they contact contaminated urine. Left untreated, this serious disease can be deadly in dogs and humans.

Common clinical signs of the disease include lethargy, abdominal pain, fever, changes in urination, and jaundice. When these signs are accompanied by test results that suggest liver or kidney damage, veterinarians know to test for leptospirosis.