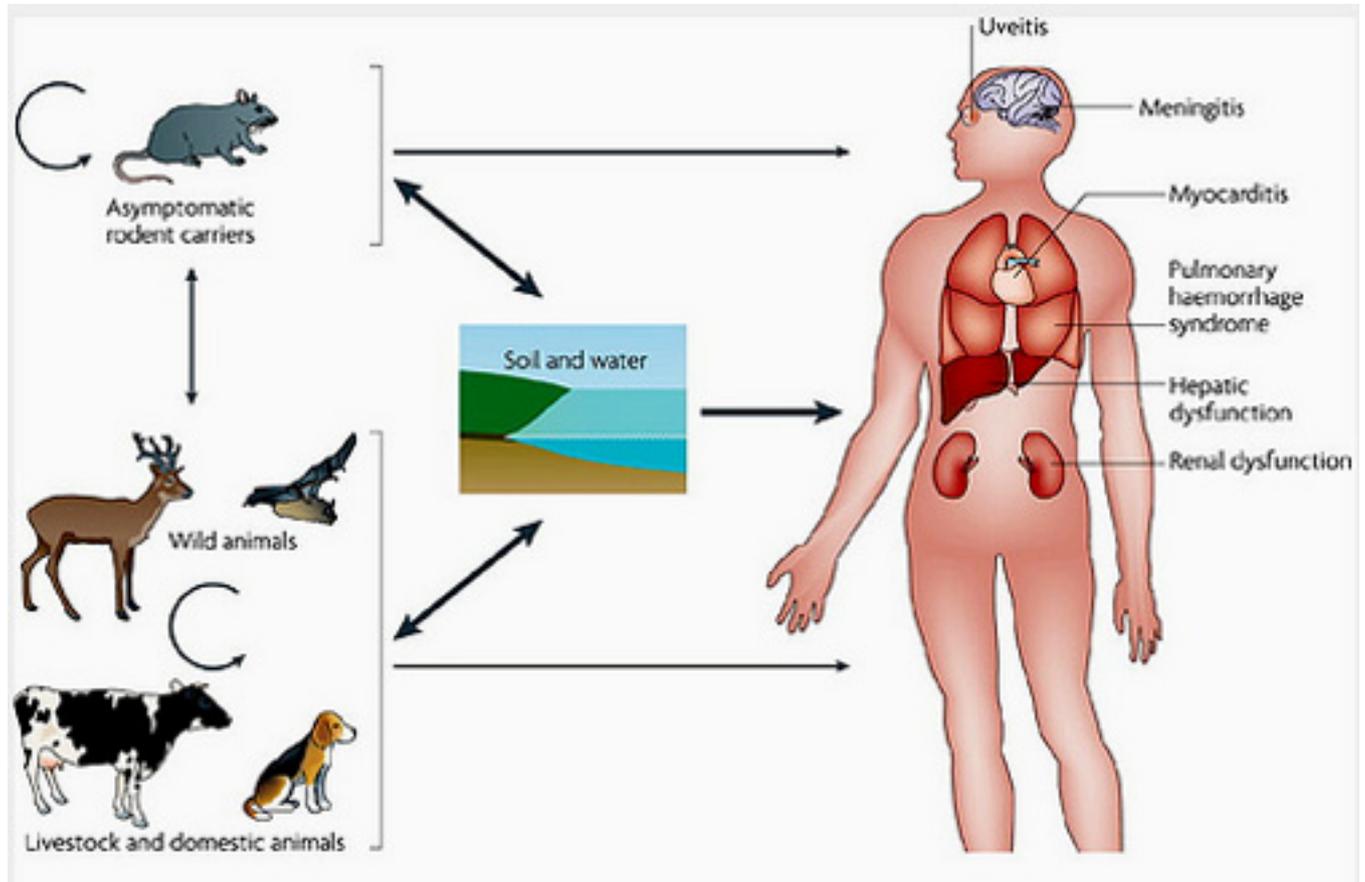


Public advised to implement rodent control programs

Written by Administrator
Friday, 02 December 2011 22:26



Leptospirosis is caused by infection with bacteria of the genus *Leptospira*, and affects humans, as well as other mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles.

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MANILA — The Department of Health (DOH) last Friday asked the public to implement rodent control programs to effectively address leptospirosis.

DOH director for Metro Manila Dr. Eduardo Janairo said leptospirosis is acquired through contact with floodwater infected with the urine of rats.

“Everyone should avoid contact with rodents. Remove their food sources, water and items that could provide them shelter. Seal holes inside and outside our homes in order to prevent their entry. Keep them outside our homes so that they will not multiply within the households,” he said.

Janairo said the public should “clean up potential rodent food sources outside and destroy their nesting sites.”

Leptospirosis is contagious as long as it is still moist.

It is caused by a bacterium called *Leptospira*.

A person can be infected through contact with water, food or soil containing urine from infected animals.

The bacteria can enter the body through wounds or open skin when wading in floodwaters, or by swallowing contaminated water and splashing contaminated water in the eyes or nose.

The illness can cause complications like meningitis, extreme fatigue, hearing loss, respiratory distress, and may sometimes result in renal and liver failure.

“Rodents such as rats and mice are the primary carriers of the leptospirosis virus. It is important

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to identify the signs of rodent infestation at home. If you regularly see rodent droppings around food packages, in drawers or cupboards, and/or under the sink then your house is infested," he added.

In the aftermath of Typhoons "Ondoy" in 2009 and "Pedring" last September, leptospirosis cases soared in areas that went under water for several days.

Health experts blamed indiscriminate dumping of garbage on the flooded roads and canals for the outbreaks, since these served as nesting grounds for rats.

According to Janairo, the presence of shredded paper and fabric, dried plant matter, signs of gnawing and chewing on food packaging or structures and damaged structures are indications of rat infestation.

He advised the public to use traps or rodenticides to remove rodents at home.

"As a precautionary measure, always place traps, baits and rodent tracking powder in places where children and pets cannot reach them. Use rodenticide products according to label directions and precautions. And also be sure to select traps that are appropriate to the type and size of rodent, such as rat or mouse. Always endeavor to keep your home safe from diseases. Prevention is still the best solution," Janairo said.

DOH records showed that from Jan. 1 to Nov. 12, 2011, there were a total of 583 leptospirosis cases, including 48 deaths, in Metro Manila.

This is 247 percent higher than the 168 cases recorded during the same period in 2010.

Signs of illnesses

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Meanwhile, the DOH and the Philippine Medical Association (PMA) also underscored the need for the public to be wary of signs of illnesses to ensure early treatment and prevent the development of complications.

PMA governor for Manila Dr. Leo Olarte said the public should also not wait until they are sick before seeing a doctor.

He stressed the importance of regularly seeking medical consultations.

“Getting sick nowadays can not only be burdensome to your body but also to your pocket as well. It is definitely cheaper and wiser to prevent diseases than to treat it afterwards. Sadly, most of our people take this fact for granted,” Olarte said in a statement.

The PMA and the DOH have banded together to prevent an epidemic of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) which are now the leading causes of illnesses and deaths in the country.

Globally, 60 percent of deaths are caused by NCDs.

Also known as lifestyle diseases, NCDs are non-infectious medical conditions characterized by prolonged duration of illness and its devastating progression.

They include cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and chronic kidney disease.

“The health sector must come together and be pro-active in our strategies in order for us to awaken our people to this truth. If we succeed, then our countrymen can be empowered to prevent diseases,” he said.