Talk No: 34	Title: LEPTOSPIROSIS (WEIL'S DISEASE)

Introduction: The presence of rats on construction sites should be discouraged so far as is practicable, but to some extent can be unavoidable, and carries with it the risk of Weil's disease. The risk exists even where rats are no longer present, but were prior to work commencing, as the organism is carried in rats' urine.

Main points:

- Discourage the presence of vermin by disposing of waste food, etc, properly.
- Do not handle the carcasses of dead rats, etc, found on site.
- Always wash your hands and forearms using hot water and soap. If clothing is contaminated then bag it and wash it.

Discussion points:

- The leptospirosis organism contaminates humans by entering broken skin, or by passing through very thin linings such the eye, ear, nose, throat, anal and vaginal areas. Cover up any cuts and abrasions with waterproof dressings where there is any risk of rats. If you cut yourself whilst at work, get it treated by a doctor/nurse.
- Consider the use of suitable PPE to assist in protection (i.e. coveralls).
- Leptospirosis starts as a mild disease but becomes serious if left untreated, and can be fatal.
- Unfortunately the signs and symptoms are very similar to flu. If you have been exposed to the risk of leptospirosis, then advise your doctor – a simple blood test can quickly confirm either way.
- The greatest risk is to those working near water, who should consider carrying a card or tag warning of risk from the disease.

- Remember that if you fall into infected water, you run the risk of contamination via water getting into your nose, ears, mouth, etc. If in doubt get it checked.

IT CAN'T HAPPEN TO ME? YES IT CAN!

Notes:

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