

CHP investigates a fatal case of leptospirosis

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (April 20) investigating a fatal case of leptospirosis, a disease caused by the bacteria leptospira.

The male patient, aged 72 with good past health, has presented with cough and fever since March 19. He attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Kwong Wah Hospital on March 23 and was admitted on the same day. The patient passed away on April 6.

Serology tests showed that he had been infected with leptospirosis. The clinical diagnosis was septic shock.

The CHP's investigation revealed that the patient had no recent travel history and his home contact was asymptomatic. Investigation is in progress.

Leptospirosis is a zoonotic disease caused by the bacteria leptospira, which can be found in some animals including rodents, cattle, pigs, horses and dogs.

Most human infections occur through contact with urine excreted by infected animals, primarily through skin abrasions, open wounds or mucous membranes and occasionally through ingestion of contaminated food or inhalation.

The disease is not normally transmissible among humans. The incubation period is usually between five and 14 days.

The CHP's spokesman said people infected with leptospirosis commonly present with a flu-like illness with high fever, headache, muscle pain, red eye, sore throat and rash. In some cases the disease can cause anaemia and affect the liver, kidneys, lungs and other internal organs. The disease can be treated effectively with antibiotics.

The risk of infection can be minimised by covering open wounds properly and avoiding contact with the urine of live animals or objects contaminated by them, as well as polluted water, the spokesman said.