

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Media Contact:**

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November 20, 2024***Ventura County Public Health Investigates Potential Leptospirosis Cases***

Ventura, CA – Ventura County Public Health (VCPH) is investigating several confirmed and presumptive cases of leptospirosis, identified among workers in local agricultural fields, specifically within the caneberry production sector. This bacterial infection, which can affect both humans and animals, is believed to have been contracted through exposure to contaminated water or soil in agricultural environments. There is currently no known danger identified in our investigation to the general public through contact or consumption of berries grown under hoops.

Leptospirosis is caused by bacteria from the *Leptospira* genus, commonly spread through contact with the urine of infected animals, including rodents and livestock. Leptospirosis is not an infection that can be spread person to person. Workers in close contact with soil and water in agricultural settings are at a heightened risk of exposure, particularly in areas where animal contamination may occur.

Symptoms and Risk Factors

Leptospirosis symptoms range from mild flu-like effects, such as fever, muscle aches, and headache, to severe complications that can impact the liver, kidneys, brain, and respiratory system. Workers involved in harvesting, handling, or working in berry production fields, may be at higher risk of infection.

Guidance and Preventive Measures for Agricultural Workers

VCPH strongly advises agricultural workers and employers to take the following precautions to reduce the risk of leptospirosis:

- **Use Protective Gear:** Wear waterproof protective clothing and equipment while working outdoors, which could include gloves, long sleeve shirts and pants, boots, or shoes, while continuing to follow recommended industry best practices for food and worker safety.
- **Cover Open Wounds:** Cover cuts and scratches with waterproof bandaging.
- **Maintain Hygiene:** Wash hands, arms, and exposed skin thoroughly with soap and water after working in the fields, especially before eating or drinking.
- **Control Pest Exposure:** Employers should take measures to keep pest populations under control.

Treatment and Seeking Care

Most cases of leptospirosis can be treated effectively with antibiotics if diagnosed early. Individuals experiencing symptoms after possible exposure should seek medical attention promptly.

For more information about Leptospirosis, people are encouraged to visit information pages created by the [California Department of Public Health](#) and the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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