

## Health Warning & Safety Advice

### Weil's Disease

These notes have been extracted from a letter written by a member of the Tone Valley M.B.C. to the chairman of S.W.A.M.B.C. who contracted Weil's and speaks from personal experience:-

It should be stressed that Weil's is a fairly rare condition but it does have disastrous effects and can be deadly to the young or infirm. The disease is spread through rats urinating in water. Early symptoms resemble a summer cold or flu. This leads to severe fever. Treatment usually involves a few days hospitalisation and a course of antibiotics. The writer, whilst cured, now suffers occasional bouts of apathy and lethargy. ME can also be a post viral condition. I have drawn up a few guidelines that will help reduce the chance of our members contracting this disease.

1. When launching and retrieving boats, members should ensure that any cuts and open wounds are covered with a good quality (100%) waterproof plaster. If this is not practical it is recommended that waterproof gloves are worn.
2. Members are recommended to wash their hands before eating, drinking, smoking, shaking hands, touching nose, mouth or eyes and even reaching for a handkerchief. A garden sprayer filled with a mild solution of antiseptic used in conjunction with paper towels is recommended as are suitable 'wet wipes'.
3. Gloves are recommended when handling ropes, lines etc. Members are reminded to take extra care when handling propellers.
4. Any cuts or wounds should be washed and treated immediately using the club's first aid kit. Any sign of high temperature or fever should be reported to your G.P. explaining that you have been in contact with river/pond water.

What is leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis, also known as canicola fever, hemorrhagic jaundice, infectious jaundice, mud fever, spirochetal jaundice, swamp fever, swineherd's disease, caver's flu or sewerman's flu, is a bacterial infection resulting from exposure to the *Leptospira interrogans* bacterium. There is an acute form of human infection known as Weil's disease, where the patient suffers from jaundice, though this term is often (incorrectly) used to describe any case of infection. Weil's disease is comparatively rare, though 'mild' cases of leptospirosis happen everywhere there are carriers, and it is believed that leptospirosis is one of the most common zoonotic infections in the world. Millions of people are infected each year, but information and treatment can be limited, especially in the developed world where cases are considered 'rare' by the medical community.

