

CANINE PARVOVIRUS

What is it?

Canine parvovirus is caused by a virus that infects the lining of the intestinal tract of dogs. It can also infect the heart muscle. Puppies are the most severely affected.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms mimic many other diseases. Symptoms may include loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, fever and decreased activity. The diarrhea may be bloody.

How is it spread?

The virus is found in the feces of an infected dog. Parvovirus particles can remain in the environment for up to one year. Therefore, it is easily picked up by another dog walking through the infected area or by a person transferring it from one area to another on their shoes or hands. Dogs with the disease continue to shed the virus in their feces for many days after they have recovered.

Who is most at risk?

Puppies and unvaccinated dogs are at the highest risk.

Diagnosis and treatment

Your veterinarian will start with a physical exam. He/she may recommend further tests i.e. blood tests, x-rays, and stool tests. Once a diagnosis of parvovirus has been made, very intensive treatment may be necessary to save the dog's life. This may include hospitalization, intravenous fluids, and multiple medications to control vomiting, bacterial infections and other complications.

Home Cleanup

After your dog has recovered they cannot be re-infected. However, their environment remains infectious for up to one year so no new dogs should be introduced to the area for at least one year unless fully vaccinated. Inanimate surfaces such as floors, toys, bedding and kennels can be disinfected with a mixture of one part bleach to thirty parts water.

Prevention

We recommend that all puppies have their first vaccine between six to eight weeks of age and then follow a regular vaccine schedule as directed by your veterinarian.

Is it safe to adopt?

There's nothing your local humane society or shelter can do to stop it from happening. Parvovirus is everywhere. It's in the ground, it's on surfaces, it's even on your pets fur. The only thing you can do is to make sure your animals are vaccinated on a regular basis and keep puppies quarantined from other dogs for at least 10 days before introducing them to the family.

