

Canine Parvovirus: Ensure Your Pet Is Protected

Canine parvovirus is a highly contagious viral disease transmitted through the fecal material of affected dogs. A dog picks up this virus by consuming contaminated organic material or even licking or chewing inanimate objects such as shoes, clothing and toys. This virus can unfortunately persist in the environment under a number of conditions because it is resistant to many common disinfectants.

The primary signs of canine parvovirus in our pets involve the gastrointestinal tract and include decreased to absent appetite, vomiting, diarrhea and weakness. Affected animals can become very sick, very quickly, due to dehydration from their gastrointestinal signs. This virus is diagnosed through a special test just for this disease and most veterinary offices can perform this test on site. In addition to the parvovirus test, more testing such as blood work, x-rays and fecal examination may be in order to rule out concurrent disease(s) and or assess for more severe complications of the virus such as low blood sugar and blood infections.

Parvovirus can be treated, however it relies on early detection and intervention before your pet becomes too sick. Treatment is aimed at supportive care to hydrate the pet, control his/her nausea and resolve their diarrhea. Treatment is not always successful, especially later in the disease course, so time is of the up most importance. When the first signs are noted, such as a change in appetite, a pet should be evaluated immediately; especially unvaccinated pets and puppies. Dogs with parvovirus must be isolated from other animals because of how highly contagious this disease is.

The most commonly affected dogs are puppies who have not completed their vaccine series, or adult dogs who have never been vaccinated. Luckily, parvovirus is a preventable disease through parvovirus vaccination! Beginning around 8 weeks of age, all puppies should be vaccinated every 3-4 weeks up until 16 weeks of age through your local veterinary office. One vaccine is not enough to keep puppies protected. As well, puppies should not be allowed in public areas where other unvaccinated dogs may roam, until they are fully vaccinated.

Again, parvovirus is a potentially fatal disease that can be prevented through appropriate vaccination. Please ensure your pets are up to date on vaccinations as it may save their life!