

# PET TALK

Fall 2009



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### Canine Parvovirus

**TIDBIT:** Vaccination  
is critical for prevention  
& protecting your dog.

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## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CANINE PARVOVIRUS

Canine parvovirus also known as parvo, is a highly infectious life threatening gastrointestinal disease and number one killer of puppies. It is spread by direct dog-to-dog contact and contact with contaminated feces, environments or people. It is resistant to heat, cold, humidity and drying, and can survive in the environment for long periods of time. Once within the animal's system, the virus typically causes clinical signs to develop 5 to 12 days after infection. It can be especially severe in puppies that are not protected by maternal antibodies or vaccination. Aggressive medical care will often save the animal, but the cost of medical treatment is much greater than the cost of protecting the dog with appropriate vaccines. Without immediate medical attention, a dog can die from parvovirus.

### SYMPTOMS

- Vomiting
- Lethargy
- Fever
- Bloody Diarrhea
- Dehydration
- Loss of appetite

### HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?

Infection is usually suspected based on the dog's history, physical examination and lab testing. Laboratory tests typically include blood tests, which will often show an insufficient number of white blood cells and fecal testing which detects the virus in the feces and confirms the diagnosis.

## CAN PARVOVIRUS BE TREATED SUCCESSFULLY?

There is no treatment to kill the virus once it infects the dog. However, the virus does not directly cause death; rather, it damages the lining of the intestinal tract. The intestinal damage results in severe dehydration, electrolyte imbalances and infection in the bloodstream. When bacteria enters into the bloodstream, it becomes more likely that the animal will die. Dog's infected with the virus need aggressive treatment in a veterinary hospital, where they receive intravenous fluids to correct the dehydration and electrolyte imbalance. Antibiotics, drugs to control vomiting and other supportive therapies are also given to support the body during the course of the disease.

## HOW IS PARVOVIRUS PREVENTED?

**Vaccination and good hygiene are critical components of canine parvovirus prevention.** The surest way to prevent parvo infection is to adhere to the recommended vaccine schedule which begins when puppies are 8 weeks of age. A series of vaccines are given 3-4 weeks apart until the puppy has reached 4 months of age. Adult dogs should receive annual vaccination thereafter. Puppies should not be allowed to socialize with other dogs until at least 2 weeks after they have had their last vaccination. Until your puppy receives its complete series of shots, or if your adult dog is not current on its boosters, you should be cautious when socializing your pet at kennels, parks, obedience classes, daycare, and the groomer.

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CANINE PARVOVIRUS AND ITS PREVENTION