



Canine Parvovirus

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What is canine parvovirus?

Canine parvovirus or “parvo” is a widespread, highly contagious viral disease infecting dogs. Young and unvaccinated dogs have a higher risk to the disease. Older animals often have developed immunity through vaccinations or early infections. The virus is very durable and can persist in the environment for greater than 6 months.

How is canine parvovirus spread?

Canine parvovirus is spread via direct contact, feces, saliva, and environmental contamination. Care should be taken not to expose other dogs or the environment with the infected dog or its bodily fluids.

What are the symptoms?

Classic symptoms include lethargy, decreased or no appetite, vomiting, diarrhea (often bloody), nausea, dehydration and fever. Some animals may be found in shock or dead.

How is it diagnosed?

Canine parvovirus can be diagnosed by detecting the virus in the feces. False negatives during testing can occur, thus the disease can be diagnosed based on history and clinical signs. False positives can occur if the dog was recently vaccinated in the last 3-5 days. If a dog tests positive and clinical signs are highly suggestive, the dog needs immediate intensive care under the supervision of a veterinarian.

What is the treatment?

There is no treatment against the virus itself. Supportive therapy is required with intravenous fluids therapy, antibiotics and anti-vomiting medications. Length and intensity of treatment depends on severity and response to treatment. Some dogs may not recover and can die of sepsis despite extensive treatment. Dogs shed parvo in feces for up to 30 days after recovery from illness.

How is it prevented?

The best method of prevention against “parvo” is through vaccinations. **Puppies should be vaccinated at 6-8 weeks of age, then boosted in a series until they are 16 weeks of age.** Exposure of puppies to other unvaccinated puppies or contaminated environments should be minimized until they have received their full set of puppy vaccinations. Due to the virus’ ability to persist in the environment, thorough cleaning and rinsing of contaminated surfaces is recommended with using 1 ounce bleach per 1 quart of water.