

ASK OUR VETERINARIANS

Canine Parvo

Most of you realize that your dog is vaccinated for parvo every year, but do you know exactly what parvo is? Parvo is short for parvovirus and is an infectious disease caused by a virus. Puppies are particularly susceptible. It is a VERY hearty virus in that it can live outside of a host (dog) in the soil and environment for years!!

The symptoms of parvo virus include: bloody diarrhea, vomiting, decreased appetite, and lethargy. If you have an unvaccinated dog or a not fully vaccinated puppy with these symptoms, they should be examined by a veterinarian ASAP. This virus specifically attacks the cells lining the gastrointestinal tract which results in the vomiting/diarrhea/decreased appetite. The virus also attacks the bone marrow resulting in a decrease in the production of white blood cells.

How is this disease spread? This virus is spread within the feces and vomit. New puppies or unvaccinated adults likely come in contact with the viral particles in the environment, via the feces or vomit, or through objects that have been in contact with contaminated feces or vomit (i.e blankets, toys, crates, HUMANS).

While there is no direct treatment for the virus itself, the treatment is supportive therapy with hospitalization, intra-venous fluids, anti-biotics to prevent other infections, anti-nausea drugs, and close monitoring. The good news is that the treatment listed above has an approximately 90% success rate. However, infected dogs left untreated have an approximately 10% chance of survival.

Luckily for us dog owners, there is a prevention! Vaccination is the BEST defense. Most vaccines are 100% effective if given properly. Puppies are recommended to be vaccinated every 3-4 weeks starting at 6-8 weeks of age, until the puppy is at least 16 weeks of age. During this vaccination period, they are still susceptible to infection, so keeping puppies away from dog parks or other areas with dogs of questionable vaccination history is advised.

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