

ORCHARD HILLS VETERINARY HOSPITAL

Canine Parvovirus

What is Canine Parvovirus?

Canine Parvovirus or “Parvo” is an extremely contagious viral disease of dogs which affects the gastrointestinal tract. The virus attacks and kills the cells in the intestines and causes bloody diarrhoea, vomiting, severe dehydration and toxæmia. The animal will often die from toxic shock or dehydration. The younger the pup, the more severe the disease.

How is it spread?

Puppies and dogs become infected when they come into contact with contaminated faeces, this can even be ‘walked in’ on your shoes. This virus can stay active in the environment for up to a year depending on the conditions and is very resistant to most disinfectants. Bleach is the best way of controlling the virus once it is in the environment. Dogs who have survived Parvovirus can sometimes continue shedding the virus for up to a year. Canine Parvovirus thrives in hot humid environments and is very present during the summer months.

Who is affected?

All dogs are at risk of ‘Parvo’ though puppies and unvaccinated dogs are the highest risk. Certain breeds such as Rottweilers & Dobermans are more susceptible to the disease.

What are the symptoms?

These symptoms may appear ‘overnight’ and the animal becomes acutely ill very quickly!

Once the dog has come into contact with the virus it can sometimes take up to 7-10 days for symptoms to show, these symptoms include;

Lethargy

Depression

Vomiting

‘Flat pup’

Bloody diarrhoea

Loss of appetite

Acute weight loss

Parvovirus has a very distinct smell which is due to the damage done to the intestines. If your pup develops any of the above symptoms it is very wise to pay a visit to your local vet. **EARLY TREATMENT IS VITAL**

Diagnosis

Can be made based on symptoms, age of pup and a faecal test which detects specific parvovirus antigens passed in the faeces for the first week or so. It is often helpful to know whether your dog actually has parvovirus or some other type of gastro condition. This will give a better idea of prognosis and also warn neighbours so they can take appropriate precautions as well as make sure their dog is fully vaccinated.

Treatment

Treatment of parvovirus is very intensive and the animal must be hospitalised if it is to have a chance of survival very large volumes of intravenous fluids are needed along with antibiotics to control secondary infections, appropriate drugs for control of severe vomiting and diarrhoea and drugs to stimulate the pup's immune system.

The hospital care is very labour intensive as pups require constant monitoring, cleaning, medicating, etc. An infected animal needs to be kept in isolation because of the highly infectious nature of the disease. Many animals need to be kept in hospital for up to 1 week.

Prevention

VACCINATION!!!! Young puppies are at a huge risk to this virus and must have the course of three vaccinations with the first being at 6-8 weeks then four and eight weeks later.

Yearly boosters ensure that your dog continues to have immunity against this virus. Do not let your puppy have any contact with other dogs until it is fully vaccinated by keeping it in your backyard only. It is important to realise that vaccination does not protect an animal for at least one week after being given.

If you are planning to breed from your bitch you need to ensure that she is vaccinated a few weeks before being mated. This will enable your bitch to pass on maximum 'maternal immunity' to the newborn pups to protect them through the very risky first 6 weeks. A pup which contracts parvo during this vital period has a very poor chance of survival.

Please call and book an appointment to get your dog vaccinated today. (02) 4736 2027