

CANINE PARVOVIRAL INFECTION

by: Simone Van Der Weele, D.V.M.

Preston Animal Clinic • 1606 King St. E., Cambridge, ON • Tel.: (519) 653-7232

In the summer of 1978 a parvo virus began causing acute outbreaks of severe diarrhea and vomiting - often with grave outcomes. This parvovirus is now found world wide and dogs of all ages, particularly puppies, can become affected. Doberman pinschers, Rottweilers and pit bull terriers appear to be at particular risk.

The parvovirus is generally spread by ingestion of faecal material from infected dogs. Infected dogs may shed this virus for up to two weeks in their faeces and the virus may stay viable for years outside the host. Once the virus is ingested it attacks the intestinal lining causing it to shed. This leaves the infected dog with no protective barrier against intestinal bacteria. Prominent clinical signs include vomiting, diarrhea (frequently bloody) no appetite and acute weakness. Some dogs will have a fever, especially during the early stages of infection.

To help prevent clinical parvoviral infections in your dog, regular vaccinations are strongly recommended. Puppies receive maternal antibodies through colostrum which will protect them from infection while the levels are high. With time, these maternal antibodies will begin to decline leaving the puppy susceptible to viral infection. To minimize the susceptible time period, it is recommended to begin vaccinating puppies at six to eight weeks of age and repeat at three to four week intervals through to 16 to 20 weeks of age. Until the vaccination protocol is complete, it is important not to take the puppy out of its home environment. The vaccine should be boosted yearly.

If your puppy or dog has acute (bloody) diarrhea and vomiting, especially if accompanied by tiredness and inappetance, it might be infected by parvovirus. The help a favourable outcome prompt attention and treatment is recommended.

Editor's notes: The virus can be carried on the bottom of shoes and in like manner. This speaks, clearly, to the importance of cleaning up after your dog. In addition to keeping your city clean, you may be saving another dog a lot of misery.

