

Canine Parvoviral Enteritis

Canine parvovirus is, in my mind, the most deadly canine virus of the last two decades. This virus causes severe debilitating and often fatal illness, the symptoms being vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, loss of appetite and often death. The virus causes illness by destroying the inner lining of the intestine. The result of this is rapid dehydration with vomit and diarrhea and secondary bacterial infection throughout the body, affecting the major organs i.e. heart, liver and kidneys.

To make matters worse, the virus attacks the bone marrow, which disables the body's immune system and its ability to naturally recover.

If untreated, this virus may cause death within 24 hours. Even with treatment the probability of death is still quite high. Survivors of parvovirus have often spent many days in the veterinary hospital, receiving critical intensive care. Parvovirus is shed in the feces of dogs that happen to be carrying it. The virus can remain active on the ground even through freezing temperatures. Puppies and adult dogs that are not adequately vaccinated against parvovirus can become infected quite readily by ingesting the virus from the ground. As a consequence, adult dogs should be vaccinated on a yearly basis for adequate protection. Puppies should receive vaccination against parvo along with other canine infectious diseases, every 3 to 4 weeks starting from age 8 weeks through to 16 to 20 weeks, depending on which type of vaccine is being used. Your veterinarian will design a protective vaccine protocol for your puppy, at the first check up.

Along with a proper vaccination program, you can protect your puppy from contracting this disease, by ensuring that it does not visit areas where dogs of unknown vaccine status have ventured. This includes parks, school grounds and sidewalks. Until your puppy has completed its vaccines it is safest in your own back yard.

Although it is tempting to take your new puppy out to the above places, just remember that you will have many years ahead to do this, so wait until the puppy is properly protected.