



Parvo Virus Discussion

Parvo virus infection is an extremely contagious disease of dogs. It is not a danger to people or cats. The virus is extremely durable, and can live in the environment much longer than most other viruses. This makes the virus very dangerous because, the longer it survives in the environment, the greater the chances of your dog coming into contact with it during its period of infectivity. The virus may remain infective in the environment for up to a month or even longer. Chlorox type bleach (mixed one part bleach to nine parts water) is the only disinfectant that will effectively sanitize a contaminated environment.

We veterinarians have effective vaccination programs to protect your dog from parvo virus infection, but the vaccine is fragile and must be handled with great care from the point of manufacture up to the moment of inoculation. Parvo virus vaccination is effective for, "Before the Fact" protection. Once a dog is exposed, the effectiveness of vaccination (at that moment in time) is vastly reduced.

Once a dog already has parvo virus infection, it is in great danger of dying. The virus most often damages the lining of the gut from the stomach to the rectum. This severe irritation is responsible for the vomiting and/or diarrhea that are the most common symptoms seen by the owner. The damaged gut allows secondary bacterial infections to invade the rest of the body. It is usually these secondary bacterial infections that ultimately kill the dog.

Even though the primary infection is viral (thus not affected by antibiotics), antibiotics are a very important part of the treatment, because they help control the secondary bacterial infections. Drugs to control vomiting and diarrhea are also very important, since they help control fluid and electrolyte loss from the body.

Home care of dogs sick with parvo virus involves feeding boiled chicken (remove skin, and bones, and use no seasoning at all), and substituting Gator-Aide for water. Cottage cheese, vanilla yogurt or boiled hamburger and rice are also helpful if the boiled chicken is refused.

Keeping the sick dog isolated from other dogs in the household as best as possible, and informing the neighbors of the illness is helpful. The neighbors' dogs may need to be re-vaccinated, and/or kept away from the contaminated household.

Remember, good nursing care is VERY important. There is absolutely no substitute for it.