

PARVO VIRAL ENTERITIS

About the Parvo Virus

Parvo is a highly contagious & severe viral infection that attacks the gastrointestinal tract of dogs, especially young pups between 6 – 20 weeks of age. Without therapy, most dogs will die due to severe dehydration and sepsis (bacterial infection in the blood). Similar to hemorrhagic gastroenteritis (HGE) in older animals, the Parvo virus attacks cells lining the intestines causing severe bloody vomiting and diarrhea. Different to HGE, Parvo also attacks the immune system and causes a decrease in the white blood cells needed to fight off the primary viral infection as well as secondary bacterial infections. Parvo pups therefore are very likely to develop sepsis (blood infection) leading to secondary infections such as pneumonia in the lungs, and infection in the joints and growth plates of bones. There are new vaccines being produced, but even with a good vaccination history, some breeds of dogs, most commonly Rottweilers and American Pit Bull Terriers can still contract a Parvo viral infection. Additionally, stressed, parasite infested, and debilitated pups (pet store pups) are more at risk despite vaccination. Once clinical signs develop, aggressive supportive care is required for a favorable outcome which is often lengthy and costly. Affected dogs are highly contagious and should immediately be isolated from other dogs. All areas they have been in should be thoroughly cleaned with a strong disinfectant, for the virus can live in the environment for several weeks.

Symptoms

- Lethargic / quiet pup
- Vomiting- turns bloody
- Diarrhea- turns bloody
- Anorexic
- Weakness / Collapse
- Fever
- Abdominal pain

Diagnosis

- **Parvo is confirmed with test on the stool which identifies the Parvo virus cite test.** The test is run at the hospital with results available in approximately 20 minutes. A parvo test should always be run on a puppy with profuse vomiting & diarrhea despite vaccination history.
- **Physical exam** reveals dehydration, abdominal pain, fever, and a high heart rate and weak pulses with shock.
- **Blood work** shows a very low white blood cells count- often less than 1000 neutrophil cells. The white blood cell count is checked frequently to monitor progress.
- **Radiographs (X-rays)** can show swollen intestinal loops with gas & fluid consistent with Parvo. Radiographs of the chest are used to screen for

pneumonia.

Therapy- aggressive medical care required!

Aggressive supportive care with IV fluids, antibiotics, anti-emetic (anti vomiting) drugs , anti-ulcer medications and plasma transfusions are needed to successfully treat a pup with a serious Parvo infection. Complications which may occur that require additional treatment include secondary bacterial infections else where in the body and low blood pressure due to protein and fluid loss into the intestines. Bacterial pneumonia can also occur secondary to aspiration from frequent vomiting or is seeded by bacteria in the blood if the pup becomes septic.

Prognosis

As with all infections, each pup is affected to a different degree and respond to therapy differently. Some pups turn right around, others take a few more days. Occasionally despite even very aggressive therapy, a pup will still die. The owner must be prepared for an emotional roller coaster ride, and a possible lengthy and costly hospital stay. The bills are frequently between \$1000- \$2000 and can be more with very severe cases or secondary complications such as bacterial pneumonia. Once a pup recovers from Parvo, they are typically immune, and live a normal full healthy life.