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Thursday, June 6, 2013

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|  | |  | | --- | | **Editorial** |   PARVO SEASON  The Pet's Corner  By Dr. CHANTE?WILDGOOSE  Ok listen up folks! Its Parvo time again. Every day, for the past three weeks, we have been receiving calls and visits from puppy owners saying that their pup or young dog is off his or her food and is vomiting. The first question we ask is how many puppy vaccines/shots has your puppy had. Nine times out of 10 the response is, 'Oh, he had one or two.' A response such as this is frustrating for veterinary professionals and it most probably means something rather devastating for the puppy.  We shall proceed to go over the dreaded Parvo virus AGAIN and discuss how you can prevent your puppy from contracting this often deadly illness.  WHAT IS PARVO?  Parvo virus is a gastro intestinal virus that wreaks havoc on the intestines of dogs and especially un- vaccinated puppies. The virus is closely related to 'stomach viruses' that affect human beings  WHO GETS PARVO?  The parvo virus is a canine virus. It affects dogs and it cannot affect humans or cats or fish! The most commonly affected dogs are puppies between the ages of four weeks to six months. More commonly, the affected dogs have an incomplete or no vaccination history. However, this does not mean that a dog over six months is safe from the disease. Adult dogs can contract the parvo virus as well. This is why it is important to have your adult dogs get a yearly parvo virus booster vaccine. Once fully vaccinated from the parvo virus if a dog still contracts the disease he will have enough protection to fight off the virus even though they suffer through some symptoms.  HOW DOES A PUPPY GET PARVO?  Parvo is an extremely contagious disease. It is transmitted via the fecal-oral route...that's right. A healthy dog will have to ingest fecal matter from an infected dog. Yuck!  Contrary to popular belief here at home parvo virus is mostly transmitted from dog to dog rather than from birds. Let me just clear up this birds-give-dogs-parvo myth:  Sick parvo dog roams the streets and parks.  Sick parvo dog defecates in the park.  Birds snoop around the park and step in the sick dog's poop.  Birds then fly to your yard and snoop around your puppy's water and food bowl...the bird literally walks in the bowls contaminating the bowls with their poopy feet!  Your unvaccinated puppy comes to have a quick drink from the now contaminated bowl.  Your puppy contracts the parvo virus.  There you have it. That was just one mode of transmission. Other ways include:  \* Rain-It can wash contaminated stools from miles away into your yard.  \* Direct contact with a sick or carrier dog  \* You exposing puppy to virus either by taking unvaccinated puppy to 'red zones' such as the beach or the park OR by visiting kennels or homes where parvo infected dogs are or were. You easily track the virus back to your home on your shoes! Bet you didn't know that!  And no, the parvo virus is NOT AIRBORNE. Your pet cannot get it by breathing in the virus  WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SYPMTOMS OF PARVO?  A parvo dog will:  \* Go off his food-no appetite not even for his favorite treat  \* Have a high fever  \* Vomit constantly  \* Have pasty, loose or watery stools  \* Have bloody foul smelling stools  \* Be lethargic and weak  \* Suffer extreme weight loss and dehydration  \* Possibly die  HOW CAN I PROTECT MY DOG FROM PARVO VIRUS?  Very simple answers here:  1. Get your Puppy vaccinated at six weeks, eight weeks, 10 weeks and 12 weeks of age. No, not three shots. Four shots will do. And please have your puppy vaccinated on time...not the first pup shot at six weeks then the second shot at five months. It doesn't work like that!  2. Keep your puppy indoors and in arms until the vaccination schedule is complete. Do not allow your puppy to walk around on the grounds or floors of any place beside your home. Do not expose your pup to any other dog until he has all of his vaccines. Do not take him to the park and do not take him to the beach until he has all of his vaccines.  IS THERE A CURE FOR PARVO?  No.  WHAT DO I DO IF MY PUPPY SHOWS SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF PARVO?  1. Get him tested at your vet's office or at the local shelter.  2. If positive, you can opt to treat him at home. The basis of home treatment is to prevent dehydration since your dog will vomit and will have severe diarrhea. Use hydrating liquids such as plain pedialyte or plain water. Your dog will also need antibiotics to prevent infection in the damaged gastro intestinal tract.  3. If positive, you can opt to have your pup treated in your veterinarian's hospital. This treatment will include intravenous fluids, antibiotic injections, anti-vomition medication, pain medication and anti-diarrheal medication. This treatment will not be free, contrary to popular belief. It will be expensive.  HOW MUCH DOES IT  COST TO TREAT PARVO?  Budget for $600-$1,500 to receive the latter type of treatment for your beloved puppy...yes...all of that for a dog!  DOES TREAMENT MEAN MY DOG WILL LIVE?  No.  A viral infection must run its course, like with the cold or flu virus. The immune system of the pet and the supportive therapy given either at home or in hospital will help the pup through the illness if possible. There are no guarantees with treating parvo virus puppies. Not even if treated in the veterinary hospital.  OTHER QUESTIONS AND MYTHS  SURROUNDING PARVO VIRUS...  Extremely often puppy owners walk into the clinic with a puppy showing full blown parvo symptoms and the owners demand either one or some or all of the following:  My Puppy has diarrhea—he needs a de-wormer  My Puppy vomited a few times...I think it's the bones he ate.  My puppy needs his second shot because he's not feeling well.  My puppy isn't eating his food...he needs some vitamins or something.  Denial or ignorance? Vaccinations do not kill germs or viruses and they certainly do not make any puppy feel better. Nor do vitamins.  Finally, there is no one-shot fix to parvo virus infection. De-wormer won't help and a vaccination will only do more harm. Parvo is an awful illness for puppies and young dogs and they depend on us to protect them against it by giving them all of their puupy vaccinations on time and by keeping them in the safest and cleanest environment until they have had all of their shots. Don't wait...vaccinate!  [E-mail this story to a friend](http://freeport.nassauguardian.net/editorial/328833396225983.php) | [Printer-friendly version](http://freeport.nassauguardian.net/print/351944188616130.php) |  |

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