

Health Research Subcommittee.

The following articles on **PARVOVIRUS AND CORONAVIRUS** and **ANAL GLANDS** have been provided to the Club through Sandra Parkes

We are grateful to Mr Garrett for writing these two articles specifically for the Club members

PARVOVIRUS AND CORONAVIRUS

Parvo is a viral gastroenteritis. It is a severe and potentially fatal disease. The virus first appeared in the late 1970s and soon severe, fatal outbreaks had occurred worldwide. Fortunately a vaccination was developed, and due to this vaccine the disease is much less prevalent now. Unfortunately despite vaccination availability I still see up to a dozen cases of parvovirus each year, usually in unvaccinated puppies up to 6 months old. Even with treatment some of these puppies still die.

The symptoms of parvovirus infections are usually foul smelling blood stained diarrhoea, vomiting, dehydration and high temperature. Usually the dog has been slightly unwell for a few days and not eating, lethargic and depressed. Sometimes the dog becomes very sick before the diarrhea starts, and this can make diagnosis difficult. Furthermore Parvo is not the only cause of severe gastroenteritis. Fortunately there is now an easy test available to detect parvovirus in the dog's faeces.

Coronavirus is an emerging disease which has very similar symptoms to parvovirus, and is indistinguishable clinically. If a sick puppy with severe gastroenteritis tests negative to Parvovirus, Coronavirus is the diagnosis by default. Coronavirus tends to affect slightly older dogs from 12 weeks to 1 year old.

Regardless of the cause the treatment of severe viral gastroenteritis is the same: hospitalization and an intravenous drip. Usually antibiotics and drugs control vomiting and intestinal cramps are also used, but plenty of intravenous fluid is the most important treatment. Like with all viruses there is no specific antiviral treatment, just support while the animal's own immune system fights off the infection. This can take more than a week in severe cases, and despite treatment puppies can still die.

Prevention of parvovirus is possible by vaccination. Puppies should be vaccinated at 6, 12 and 16 weeks then have a booster every year to maintain immunity. Vaccination of the bitch with a killed parvovirus vaccine mid pregnancy will ensure maximum protection for the newborn pups. Puppies can also be vaccinated against coronavirus in addition to the standard vaccination course.

Young pups which have not completed their vaccination course should be protected from exposure to parvo by making sure that they only have contact with vaccinated dogs, and only frequent places which are clean and free of possible contamination by parvovirus. This is difficult as the virus is very resistant in the environment. Tests have shown that the virus can survive on concrete for up to 2 years! This danger period coincides with the important development stage where puppies begin to learn social and life skills and so need contact with other dogs, people and need to experience the world outside the home.

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