WILDLIFE HEALTH FACT SHEET

CANINE PARVOVIRUS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Canine parvovirus is a disease of canids, or dog-like animals such as dogs, coyotes and wolves. It only infects these species so is not a danger to humans or other species. All ages of dogs may be affected, but puppies and older dogs appear to be most susceptible.

The virus is related to feline panleukopenia, which is also known as feline distemper, and raccoon parvovirus. It is transmitted between animals by oral contact with fecal material from infected animals. Infected dogs shed the virus in their feces for approximately 2 weeks and the virus can survive in the environment for a very long time.

Canine parvovirus causes an intestinal infection resulting in severe diarrhea and often vomiting. The diarrhea typically contains blood and has a very characteristic odor. Affected animals will not eat, are extremely weak and usually have vomiting and bloody diarrhea. Death often follows as a result of dehydration, shock and secondary infections.

Treatment includes intensive support with intravenous fluids, good nursing care and antibiotics in domestic dogs. Animals have been reported to survive without treatment but this is not common. Affected dogs should be isolated to prevent infection of other dogs.

Prevention of the disease by vaccination of dogs as puppies has reduced the occurrence of canine parvovirus in the dog population, however outbreaks are reported in areas of British Columbia where vaccination is not commonplace or groups of susceptible dogs exist. Outbreaks or suspected outbreaks have been reported in wild coyotes and wolves as well. It is believed that these outbreaks may be associated with outbreaks in domestic dogs. Reports in wild canids usually involve a number of dead animals found in an area, with or without sick animals reported. In many cases confirmation of the disease is not possible because appropriate samples are not available. Wolves or coyotes found in poor dehydrated condition with fecal material on their hindquarters may have been affected by canine parvovirus. Carcasses should be isolated from other canids and incinerated or buried deeply.