

### From the Vet:

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*There are many issues facing animal owners in regards to their pets and livestock. These issues include, but are not limited to basic care, rights of an animal, emerging diseases, and what to do in an emergency. The staff members of Cache Creek Veterinary Hospital have decided to write a series of articles to help shed some light on these issues. After the articles are printed in the The Journal we will post them on our website so they can be referred to at any time. We hope you enjoy these articles and find them insightful.*

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### **Parvovirus - a Fatal but Preventable Disease**

Parvovirus is a viral disease in dogs which can affect all dogs, especially puppies. It causes severe vomiting, diarrhea, immunosuppression (cannot fight disease) and can result in death if the dog is not treated in an intensive care setting at a veterinary hospital. Infected dogs become contagious to other dogs before they show any symptoms of the disease. The mode of transmission of this disease is by exposure to highly contagious feces of an infected dog. Recently wild canids (wolves etc.) have been indicated in spreading Parvovirus to dogs.

A dog does not need to come in contact with an infected dog to contract Parvovirus. For example, a person can step in a small amount of fecal material or touch an infected dog and then go home and expose their dog to the virus. The virus is extremely resistant and can be transmitted on a variety of objects making it impossible to prevent exposure to this virus.

This viral disease is present in the environment worldwide and can affect dogs at any time of year. Parvovirus is an extremely resistant virus that can remain in the environment for 7 months, or longer if outside during the winter months, as freezing does not destroy it. Most disinfectants do not destroy the virus which is another reason that it so problematic.

Dogs that become infected by the virus become very sick and if they are not treated there is a high risk of death. If affected animals are admitted to an intensive care setting at a veterinary hospital there is a much better prognosis for return to health. In Cache Creek an average of 1-2 dogs are seen a month in the veterinary hospital - but many more dogs are affected that do not come into the hospital. On average 90% of dogs who are admitted to the hospital and stay until they return to health will survive. Costs to treat a dog with Parvovirus can easily reach up to \$2000 due to the prolonged treatment time (up to one week) required to return to health.

Fortunately this disease is easily prevented in all dogs. Vaccinating your dog and reducing exposure in puppies can virtually eliminate the risk for developing this disease. Puppies should be vaccinated against Parvovirus at 8, 12 and 16 weeks, and then yearly as recommended by your veterinarian. Vaccination is a fraction of the cost of treatment, and protects against more than just Parvovirus. Full immunity against Parvovirus is not achieved until shortly after the vaccine at 16 weeks of age, so it is important to try to reduce the risk of exposure in puppies. This involves avoiding areas of high dog traffic, and only socializing a puppy with well vaccinated dogs.

Please consult with your veterinarian to determine the best vaccine schedule for your dog.