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Coronavirus in puppies.

This is a viral disease that affects dogs of all ages.

The disease leads to diarrhoea and vomiting in dogs.

After vomiting and diarrhoea the disease can lead to death if the dog is not treated.

The best way to prevent Coronavirus is through preventative coronavirus vaccination.

Canine Coronavirus ties with Canine Parvovirus as the leading viral causes of diarrhoea in puppies.

Clinically, the two infections can be indistinguishable.

But they are quite different in their final effect - Canine Coronavirus rarely kills the puppy while Canine Parvovirus often does.

Canine Coronavirus is widespread in the dog population worldwide.

It invades the rapidly growing cells of the intestinal lining causing nausea, lack of appetite, vomiting and diarrhoea.

It is primarily a disease of puppies.

Coronavirus is shed in the faeces of infected dogs for months after initial ingestion.

It takes one two three days from the time the puppy is exposed to an infected dog's stool for it to become visibly sick.

There are slight (antigenic) differences between coronavirus strains isolated from puppies with diarrhoea.

So puppies and dogs immune to a particular strain of Coronavirus may not be immune other strains of the virus.

Most dogs probably become infected with coronavirus and recover without getting ill or after a sickness too mild for owners to notice.

We know this because most adult dogs have antibody to this disease which indicates that they were, at one time, exposed to the virus.

Canine Coronavirus is an RNA-type virus and a member of the Group I Coronaviruses. When the virus is viewed under an electron microscope the particles have a halo-like crown of projections or "Corona".

Coronavirus is surrounded by a fatty protective coating which makes it rather easy to kill with detergent and solvents that dissolve fats.

This is in contrast to Parvovirus, which is very tough and hard to kill.

Coronavirus is spread from dog to dog through infected faeces.

Symptoms.

The main sign of Coronavirus in puppies is watery diarrhoea.

It differs from the diarrhoea produced from eating trash in not containing much mucous.

It differs from the diarrhoea produced by Parvovirus in that it rarely contains digested blood. Some pups with the disease vomit, others do not.

Coronavirus diarrhoea is often less violent than Parvovirus diarrhoea.

However, there is enough overlap of symptoms so that coronavirus cannot be differentiated from parvovirus by clinical signs alone.

Coronavirus diarrhoea typically lasts 2-4 days and very few puppies die from it. If puppies do die, there are usually other problems occurring at the same time, such as parasites, dual infection with parvovirus or malnutrition.

How the disease progresses:

Within 2-3 days of ingesting the virus, coronavirus can be found in the upper two-thirds of the puppy's small intestine.

In very rare cases the virus may also invade the spleen, liver and brain and lungs.

During this same period diarrhoea begins. Diarrheal usually lasts 2-7 days.

The diarrhoea is due to mal absorption of nutrients and a deficiency in digestive enzymes.

Most infected dogs shed coronavirus in their stools for 6-9 days. But shedding can be prolonged in some pups.

Most puppies recover after a few days of diarrhoea and poor appetite.

However, puppies less than three months of age may die of the virus if they are weakened in some other way.

This could be due to a second disease, being the runts of the litter or come from over-bred, poorly maintained mothers.

Puppies with coronavirus rarely have a fever. This is true of many infections in puppies because they lose body heat so rapidly.

When I feel the tummies of these puppies they are often bloated and tight.

I can usually feel gas-filled tender loops of intestine and enlarged mesenteric lymph nodes in their abdomens.

Treatment.

There is no specific treatment your veterinarian has that kills canine coronavirus.

“Metoclopramide” is prescribed that relax intestinal spasms –

“Loperamide, oral opioids or diphenoxylate (Lomotil).”

“Pedilite” to try correcting the dehydration - in severe circumstances fluids need to be given intravenously or subcutaneously.

Compounds that protect the inner surfaces of the inflamed intestines can also be helpful.

Common ones include: famotidine (Pepcid), cimetidine (Tagament) and sucralfate (Carafate) when the vomiting has been controlled.

Treating vomiting: Medications that stop vomiting are called anti-emetics - metoclopramide (Reglan) - Chlorpromazine (Thorazine); and prochlorperazine (Compazine) are also used.

Sometimes, Pepto-Bismol in small amounts is helpful.

Antibiotic protection: Antibiotic do not destroy coronavirus.

Prescribed to give the pup protection from other bacteria that may attack its weakened system.

For general support:

Chilled puppies need additional sources of heat such as a heating pad or heat lamp.

Many of these puppies have internal parasites that complicate the disease and if detected protozoa in faecal samples treat with metronidazole (Flagyl) and or pyrantel pamoate.

No food for 2 days to let the intestines heal then start with food by mouth.

Frequent small amounts of a bland intestinal diet like homemade blend of pureed chicken a rice.

How to prevent this disease?

Have your puppy vaccinated against coronavirus at 8 and 12 weeks of age.

Adult dogs do not require yearly boosters.

Be sure it is free from intestinal worms and receiving a quality diet. Coronavirus takes advantage of weakened puppies - so anything you do to give it a low stress-high quality environment will help protect it from coronavirus as well.

Avoid dog to dog contact or contact with objects that are contaminated with the virus prevents infection.

Do not take your new puppy to places that other dogs visit until its puppy shot series is completed.

Crowding, dirty facilities, grouping large numbers of dogs, and all types of stress make outbreaks of this disease more likely.

Enteric Coronavirus are moderately resistant to heat, acids and disinfectants but not nearly so much as Parvovirus.

Use F10 as detergent to clean.

The disease is a big problem in large puppy "mills" where sanitation and husbandry are poor.

These outbreaks could have been prevented by quarantining newly-arrived puppies and sanitizing the facility with a 1:20 dilution of ordinary household bleach or swimming pool chlorite 1 cup/5l or disinfecting with F10.

Canine respiratory coronavirus.

We now know that a second type of dog coronavirus exists.

This strain, known as Group II, affects the dog's respiratory tract rather than its intestine.

It causes coughing, sneezing and a nasal discharge.

It is one of the organisms involved in "kennel cough" or CIRDC.

When it is a problem, it is usually working in combination with other disease organisms.

It is seen most often when large numbers of dogs are housed together such as in boarding kennel, animal shelters, dog shows and dog race tracks.