

March 23, 2010

The recent report of a confirmed case of canine parvovirus in a dog at the PEI Humane Society has raised many questions from concerned owners about the disease. Although there is no reporting system for the disease on PEI, there have been anecdotal reports from some Island clinics that they have recently seen more cases of parvovirus than normal.

The PEI Veterinary Medical Association would like to remind the public about the importance of this serious disease. Canine parvovirus, generally referred to as "parvo", is a virus that causes lethargy, loss of appetite, fever, vomiting and diarrhea in dogs. Puppies and unvaccinated dogs are especially susceptible to the disease. Even with intensive treatment, severely affected dogs may not survive. The virus is spread by dog-to-dog contact, and contact with the virus in infected feces or in the environment.

Prevention is through vaccination and good hygiene. Puppies should be vaccinated at 8, 12 and 16 weeks of age, even if they have had a 6 week vaccine. Adult dogs' vaccinations should be kept current. The virus is extremely resistant to disinfectants and can survive in the environment for a long period of time. Therefore, until a puppy or dog has completed the necessary vaccine series, an owner should limit the animal's exposure to areas where dogs congregate, such as dog parks. In general, it is good practice to prevent a dog's exposure to the feces of other dogs for many health reasons, including the prevention of canine parvovirus.

If an owner has any concerns that their dog may have canine parvovirus, or are unsure if their dog's vaccinations are adequate to protect against the disease, the PEIVMA asks that they please contact their veterinarian.