

PARVO VIRUS

Written by Kay Dettling

This potentially fatal virus affecting young dogs and especially puppies, surely is a tough virus. For this reason, it never seems enough to emphasize the importance of protecting puppies from this disease by vaccinating them. Puppies as small as 6 weeks-8 weeks old can be vaccinated against Parvo every 3-4 weeks until they have completed the series up to when they are 14-18 weeks old. It is important that owners realize that puppies are not fully immunized until a few weeks after they have completed the entire series.

If Parvo has already struck an area and owners are concerned about adding a second puppy to a home, many precautionary measures will need to be taken. Often owners may lose a puppy to Parvo and then make the mistake of adopting another puppy which can be very vulnerable to Parvo because the virus is still present in the environment. Often these owners do not realize that Parvo may live in the environment for even up to 7 months or they may underestimate the chances of a new puppy getting the virus.

Instead these owners should be very concerned because Parvo Virus is a very hardy virus that thrives in homes and yards even with freezing temperatures. Parvo indeed is very resistant and normal household chemicals do not work to kill the virus. The virus is shed in feces so all areas where feces are present are considered contaminated. The virus is shed in enormous amounts; just think that an ounce of stool from an infected dog may produce up 35 million viral particles!

The virus can be easily transported by the dog's paws around the home, but also it could be found as well on the owner's shoes, clothes, etc. Even a car's tires can transport the virus if they were in contact with contaminated stool. So attempting to remove the Parvo Virus from a dog's environment is a tough battle and it is almost impossible to fight because it could be virtually everywhere.

While there are products that can kill the virus it is a very difficult to disinfect everything and everywhere. "Indoors, virus loses its infectivity within one month" while outdoors, and yet freezing is completely protective to the virus. If the outdoors is contaminated and is frozen, one must wait for it to thaw out before safely introducing a new puppy. Shaded areas should be considered contaminated for seven months whereas areas with good sunlight exposure should be considered contaminated for five months." Of course, it never hurts to err on the side of caution and wait longer before adding a new puppy or even an elderly dog.

So now what should owners do if they have other puppies living in a Parvo contaminated area? There is really not much more that can be done other than picking up all the feces and disinfecting the contaminated areas where there are chances the Parvo virus may be thriving.

The only product to seem to be effective in killing the virus is bleach. Disinfecting is accomplished by using diluted bleach and water in an exact ratio of 1:30, one part bleach in 30 parts water. In order to work, the bleach mixture should be left in contact with contaminated surfaces for at least 10 minutes.

Of course, if used on grass, the grass will die (but ultimately better than having the virus thrive on it!) and of course, the bleach cannot be used on couches or carpets as it will stain. Bedding, bowls, blankets and toys that may be contaminated by the virus are better off tossed. **Puppies should not be introduced to homes where there is a history of Parvo until at least a month has passed or at least 7 months have passed for contaminated yards.**

Avoiding the outdoors, where there may be feces contaminated with Parvo is key and disinfecting shoes, clothes and anything coming from the outdoors is crucial. However, the virus can be found just about everywhere, at the dog park, at the vet's office waiting room, in yards, etc. Therefore, puppies should have limited exposure to other puppies and places frequented by puppies until they are fully vaccinated against Parvo.

The good news is that once a puppy is infected by Parvo, it is immune to the virus for at least 20 months and sometimes for life.

While avoiding the Parvo virus may sound like a huge task, being prepared for the worst would be best. Know how to recognize the symptoms of Parvo and report to your vet immediately should your puppy start exhibiting any of them. The faster the diagnosis the better the prognosis. It would be helpful to keep handy a special product produced by Amber Technology known as Parvaid. This product is a natural remedy with good reviews especially when given at the first signs of Parvo.

Parvo is a very scary and possibly deadly disease. We are coming upon the time of year that the Parvo virus can really bloom. Elderly dogs can and do get this disease if we are not meticulous or watchful on keeping our Golden Retrievers safe from other dogs and/or their environment.