



# HUMANE SOCIETY OF KENT COUNTY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – August 27, 2008

## MEETING HELD REGARDING SUSPECTED PARVOVIRAL INFECTION IN THE CANINE COMMUNITY

(Grand Rapids, Mich – August 27, 2008) --- Last night the West Michigan Academy of Small Animal Practitioners called an emergency meeting of local veterinarians to discuss current concerns regarding canine parvovirus in our pet population. Thirty-six area veterinarians gathered and compared results of current research articles, incidence of infection and methods of protection for local canine pets. The Academy and the Humane Society of Kent County believe that the following information will be helpful to the community.

Parvoviral infection has been prevalent in the canine population since the early 1980s. This disease causes severe vomiting and diarrhea that can lead to life threatening dehydration. Dogs that contract this infection and are not properly treated will usually die from canine parvoviral infection.

There has NOT been an obvious increase in the number of canine parvoviral infections in properly immunized dogs this season. However, dogs that are not appropriately vaccinated may run a very high risk of parvoviral infection. This disease is a potentially devastating, life-threatening illness.

There have been no confirmed cases of the new C2 strain of canine parvovirus in Michigan. This strain of the virus has been isolated in Europe and in 12 other US states and has been present for 7+ years.

Currently, it appears that properly immunized dogs are protected from the C2 strain of parvovirus. It is imperative that dogs be properly immunized in order to have the best chance of protection from all forms of parvovirus. All the vaccines currently being used by area veterinarians are protective against the 2C strain of parvovirus (providing the proper vaccination protocols are followed).

Unvaccinated puppies and unvaccinated or inadequately vaccinated adult dogs are at greatest risk for parvovirus and should be seen by their veterinarian as soon as possible.

### **Proper immunization protocol:**

- Puppies should be vaccinated beginning at 4 to 8 weeks and then vaccinated every 2 to 4 weeks until the puppies are older than 16 weeks (4 months) of age.
- After 16 weeks of age, the adult dog should be vaccinated 1 year later and then at appropriate intervals as described by your veterinarian.
- An unvaccinated or inappropriately vaccinated adult dog should receive a series of two vaccinations given 2 to 4 weeks apart.
- Vaccines must be stored and administered properly – the vaccine will not be effective if inappropriately handled.
- Vaccines should only be administered to completely healthy dogs. Dogs that are unfit, unhealthy or suffering from parasites may not respond to the vaccine.

- Veterinary consultation, full physical examination of the pet and proper vaccination are important for full protection against this disease.

Provided that the above vaccinations protocols are followed, all commercially available vaccines are protective against the 2C strain of parvovirus.

It is very important to make sure that the pet owner's boarding facilities, grooming salons, day care centers and dog parks are practicing preventive care by requiring the pets in their facilities to be properly immunized against all of the highly communicable or life threatening diseases. For dogs those diseases are:

Distemper, Hepatitis, Parainfluenza, Parvovirus, Rabies and Bordetella Bronchiseptica (also known as Kennel Cough or Canine Cough). In addition, the pet owner should proceed with caution when exposing their dogs to facilities that have no strict vaccination requirements.

Parvovirus is a very serious and robust virus and can survive for years in the environment. Consult with your local veterinary office for specifics about cleaning and disinfection of the environment if your pet has been exposed to parvovirus.

Some of the West Michigan pet population is also experiencing an upper respiratory illness. Symptoms of both Canine Influenza and the much less troublesome disease known as Canine Cough or Kennel Cough include coughing, runny nose, sneezing and lethargy. Although Canine Influenza is a very serious disease that can cause life threatening respiratory symptoms, there have been NO confirmed cases of Canine Influenza in Michigan. It is suggested that dogs be vaccinated for Canine Cough if they are regularly exposed to other dogs. Pet owners should seek advice from their veterinarian if they believe their pet may have a respiratory condition or if they have further questions about respiratory conditions.

Your veterinarian is the best source of information regarding pet health and prevention of communicable disease. If you do not have a veterinarian, the Humane Society of Kent County can help you find a veterinarian in your area that will answer your questions and help to keep your pets healthy.

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