



CANINE DISTEMPER VIRUS

Distemper is a viral disease, which affects the gastrointestinal, respiratory, and central nervous systems in dogs, well as the conjunctival membranes of the eye.

What Causes It?

The canine distemper virus (CDV) causes the disease. It is highly contagious, and is often fatal

How Is It Transmitted

The virus is passed from dog to dog through direct contact with fresh urine, blood or saliva. It doesn't last long in the environment so is more commonly spread by direct contact with an infected animal. Sneezing, coughing and sharing food and water bowls are all possible ways for the virus to be passed on. Distemper can affect other species such as ferrets.

Signs And Symptoms Of The Disease

Dogs of all ages can be affected. The first signs of Distemper include:-

- sneezing and coughing
- thick mucus coming from the eyes, mouth and nose.
- Fever
- lethargy
- sudden vomiting and diarrhea,
- depression and/or loss of appetite

Dogs with very severe symptoms often die, whereas, mildly affected dogs will recover, but some will go on to have neurological problems in later life, known as 'old dog encephalitis'. Symptoms of this can include muscle tics, difficulty walking or walking in circles and seizures.

Other long term symptoms are eye problems and thickening of the skin on the nose and pads. This is why distemper is sometimes known as 'hard pad'.

Diagnosis

Canine distemper tests do exist, but the results alone are not always reliable. Rather than just testing for the infection, your vet has to look at the whole picture, including a dog's specific symptoms and health history.

Positive results can help confirm an infection, but a dog can still be infected even if test results are negative.

Treatment

There is no specific treatment; however intravenous fluids can be given to prevent dehydration and medication can help to control seizures.

Prevention

- make sure your dog has completed his series of vaccinations.
- make sure that you keep him away from any dogs that could possibly be infectious
- Also, routinely clean and disinfect your home (or kennel) to ensure that the virus is not in your dog's living environment.