

## Common Infectious Diseases of Dogs

### ***Rabies***

Rabies is a viral disease that can affect all warm-blooded mammals, including dogs, cats, wildlife and humans. The virus infects cells of the nervous system, producing in-coordination and behavioral abnormalities such as unusual aggression or withdrawal. Once the signs of rabies appear, the disease is always fatal. Rabies is usually transmitted by the bite wounds, often from infected wildlife, which represent the largest reservoir of the United States. Vaccines are very effective in preventing rabies. Most states in the U.S. require rabies vaccination of dogs at one to three year intervals.

### ***Canine Distemper***

Canine distemper is a widespread virus that causes high mortality in dogs. Exposure is considered inevitable during a dog's lifetime, so canine distemper vaccination is almost always recommended. Puppies and young dogs without immunity are at greatest risk. Canine distemper virus infects various tissues in the dog's body, producing diarrhea, fever, nasal and ocular discharge, respiratory disease, loss of appetite and neurologic signs such as muscular spasms and paralysis. The disease is easily transmitted and often fatal.

### ***Parvovirus Enteritis***

Diarrhea and vomiting caused by parvovirus can range from mild to severe and are accompanied by depression and loss of appetite. Puppies and young dogs are most commonly affected because they usually haven't been vaccinated and are susceptible to infection. Viral enteritis is spread through feces, which contaminates the environment and is readily spread from one animal to another. This disease is extremely prevalent in Hampton Roads.

### ***Leptospirosis***

Leptospirosis is a potentially fatal bacterial infection resulting from contact with the urine of infected wildlife, or contaminated water or food. *Leptospira* bacteria infect the kidneys and liver, causing fever, anorexia, depression and generalized pain.

### ***Bordetella and Influenza***

Infectious respiratory disease is a troublesome problem in dogs because it is easily transmitted through the air or by direct contact, especially in kennels or among dogs living together. Upper respiratory disease can limit the dog's activity and progress to pneumonia, which can be life-threatening.

Canine influenza is an infectious disease caused by a "flu" virus. In dogs, a highly contagious strain of the influenza A virus known as H3N8 is able to cause respiratory illness. Just like the human "flu", canine influenza is highly contagious. In fact, unless a dog has already had the illness and recovered, virtually every dog exposed to the virus will become infected. The most common sign of canine influenza is a persistent cough. Dogs will either have a soft, moist, "productive" cough, or dry cough similar to kennel cough. Canine influenza is usually mild but can become quite serious in some dogs. In about 20% of the cases more severe signs will occur, such as high fever, and pneumonia. Most dogs, regardless of breed or age are at risk, especially in boarding kennels or doggie daycare, group training, grooming or dog parks. The virus spreads through *direct contact* (kissing, licking, nuzzling) or *through the air* (coughing or sneezing) or via *contaminated surfaces* (such as when a person picks up the virus on their hands or clothing.)