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CANINE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE

What is coronavirus disease?

Coronavirus disease is a variable intestinal infection of dogs that is usually short-lived, but may cause considerable discomfort for a few days. The cause is a virus of the Coronavirus family. The virus gets its name from the fact that when viewed from above under an electron microscope the virus has a ring of projections which appear like a coronet. Different coronaviruses cause infections in many species of animals and birds. People are not affected by Canine Coronavirus.

How is coronavirus transmitted?

Infected dogs usually shed the virus in their feces and saliva for one to two weeks, sometimes longer. The virus is then ingested from contaminated food bowls or by direct contact with an infected dog. Crowding and unsanitary conditions favor transmission. The incubation period from ingestion to clinical signs is one to five days.

What are the signs of coronavirus?

Many infections are subclinical or mild and transient. Occasional infections and outbreaks are more severe, particularly in young pups. Mixed infections, for instance with *parvovirus* (see *Parvovirus Disease*) may intensify the disease. Coronavirus diarrhea is typically sudden in onset, accompanied by lethargy and decreased appetite. The stool is loose, mushy with a fetid odor and orange tint. It may contain blood or mucus.

Are there diseases that can be confused with coronavirus?

There are many causes of diarrhea in dogs. Severe cases of coronavirus can be easily confused with parvovirus, and they may occur at the same time. Be sure to see your veterinarian if your dog has diarrhea that does not resolve within 24 hours or is associated with significant lethargy and/or loss of appetite.

Is there any treatment?

There is no specific treatment for coronavirus. Antibiotics are ineffective against viruses, but may be useful in controlling secondary bacterial problems. Withholding food until 24 hours after diarrhea ceases and gradually reintroducing may be sufficient. Dehydration is usually corrected with intravenous fluids. Early medical intervention is the key to successfully treating severe cases of coronavirus infection.

What about vaccines?



Canine coronavirus vaccines have been developed in recent years, and are becoming more widely used in routine vaccination programs.