

CANINE DISTEMPER

- 1. Canine Distemper is a very prevalent, highly contagious disease of dogs caused by a virus.** The virus may be spread by contact with mucous and watery secretions discharged from the eyes and noses of infected dogs. Infection may also occur from exposure to urine, fecal material, and through the air.
- 2. Better than 50% of adult dogs that contact the disease will die.**
Among puppies, the death rate often reaches 80%.
- 3. Many dogs that do survive the initial disease will suffer permanent damage to the nervous system (brain and spinal cord).** Partial or total paralysis may often result. Seizures often occur which become more frequent and severe as the disease progresses. Most dogs that develop these signs must be euthanized.
- 4. Cats are not susceptible to Canine Distemper.** The so-called “Cat Distemper” is a different disease caused by a different virus.
- 5. Signs of Distemper include squinting, congestion of the eyes, and eye discharges.** Weight loss, vomiting, nasal discharges, poor appetite, and diarrhea sometimes occur. Most infected dogs have a fever and “stuffed up” head. Bronchitis and Pneumonia often occur. In some cases, no signs are observed until seizures begin. Occasionally the virus affects the foot pads resulting in “hard pads.”
- 6. Prevention is easily accomplished by proper vaccination beginning when the pup is 6-8 weeks of age.**
A series of immunizations must be given to give proper immunity. Boosters are required to keep proper immunity as an adult.
- 7. Treatment is very difficult since the cause is a virus.** There are currently **NO** drugs available to kill the virus, just as there are no drugs to kill most of the viruses affecting people. Drugs are used to strengthen the pup’s body to help it fight the virus. Antibiotics are given to prevent secondary bacterial infections such as pneumonia.
- 8. Recovery often takes 6-8 weeks before it can be assumed the dog will not be left with any of the permanent damage affecting the brain.** Many dogs appear to respond very well to the initial medications, but then later develop seizures or twitches.