

Young-Williams Animal Center
Contact: Randy Keplinger, (865) 215-6599

The University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine
Sandra Harbison (865) 974-7377 or 755-6223

For immediate release

PARVOVIRUS OUTBREAK

(Knoxville, TN.) A recent rash of parvovirus has area animal control officials concerned. Randy Keplinger, executive director of the Young-Williams Animal Center, says the center has seen an increase in the number of cases over the same time last year, “At first, most of the parvovirus cases were coming from the central area of Knoxville. But now we are picking up infected dogs from throughout the city.” Keplinger says that indicates the problem is widespread.

In the past three weeks, the center has seen close to 40 parvovirus cases. Symptoms include lethargy, loss of appetite, fever, vomiting, and severe, usually bloody, diarrhea. Local veterinarians are also seeing an increase in the number of cases. Dr. Brian Kendrick, a member of the Knoxville Veterinary Medical Association, says he has seen more cases than usual. While working at the Pet Emergency Clinic on Ailor Avenue, Dr. Kendrick treated almost a dozen parvovirus cases in one day. “While the majority of the cases are located within ten square miles of downtown Knoxville, we are now seeing it in the more rural areas, too.” Puppies less than four months and unvaccinated dogs are at an increased risk of acquiring the disease, which is usually fatal if left untreated.

Canine parvovirus is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus that attacks the gastrointestinal tract of puppies and dogs. The animals usually become infected when they ingest the virus that is passed in the feces from an infected dog. It can be spread by the hair and feet of dogs, pet bedding, as well as shoes and clothes. The parvovirus, which can withstand freezing temperatures, can also survive a long time in the environment, allowing it to infect other dogs.

Vaccination and good hygiene help prevent parvovirus. A series of vaccinations are administered during the puppy’s first few months. Adult dogs’ vaccinations should be kept current. Do not allow a dog to come into contact with the fecal waste of other dogs. To limit the spread of the parvovirus, promptly and appropriately dispose of waste material. Avoid contact with known infected dogs and their premises. People cannot get parvovirus from dogs. If you suspect your dog has been exposed to the virus, contact your veterinarian immediately.