

EXTERNAL PARASITES

Fleas: These can cause a widespread allergic skin irritation in your dog. The flea is also part of a tapeworm life cycle, so apart from external problems with fleas it is likely your dog will be hosting internal parasites as well. Fleas are happy residing on all hosts which may well be you! They will lay dormant in carpets, baseboards, bedding etc until a host passes by at which time they will hop aboard. When de-fleaing the dog you will need to de-flea his environment too. They can often be seen on the coat of a light coloured dog or on the edge of the hairline on a dogs belly. Look for the presence of black specks (faeces) which will indicate a flea problem. To treat for fleas, dust the dog with a flea powder or use an aerosol can. Start at the dogs extremities working towards the middle of the dog and brush out when the entire dog has been treated. Repeat at weekly intervals until all signs of fleas have gone.

Ticks: When feeding on a dog they look like small greyish warts with tiny legs at the head end. Upon becoming fully engorged they can grow up to one centimetre long and become reddish coloured. If you think your dog has them check with your veterinarian.

NEUTERING

All dog owners should consider having their dogs de-sexed to help reduce the thousands of homeless dogs being euthanased every year. It can help reduce aggression and wandering in dogs and stops the problems associated with your female dog coming into season every six months. Statistics have shown that it can make dogs less susceptible to disease.

HYDATIDS

On 1 July 1996 the regulations governing the movement of dogs were revoked, and dog owners thereafter were not required to have their dogs treated for hydatids before taking them out of the Whangarei District Council area. Owners that wish to have their dogs treated may do so by contacting their veterinarian.

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Should I Vaccinate my Dog?



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SHOULD I VACCINATE MY DOG?

Dogs should be regularly vaccinated for distemper, hepatitis, parvo-virus and kennel cough. These viral diseases are highly contagious and potentially fatal, especially in puppies. Check with your veterinarian when your new pup arrives, it should have already received the first in a series of puppy vaccinations which need to continue until approx 16 weeks of age and then as an adult. Adult dogs should be vaccinated every 12 months to keep them safe from the following viral diseases.

CANINE HEPATITIS

This virus is a highly contagious disease transmitted only to dogs and should not be confused with hepatitis in man. Primarily it affects the liver, kidneys and lining of the blood vessels. Infectious canine hepatitis presents a variety of signs and symptoms that range from those of a mild infection to one of extreme and rapidly fatal infection. At times it is difficult to distinguish from distemper. A few days after a dog is exposed, the virus multiplies in the dog's tissues and is shed through its stool, saliva and urine which is extremely infectious to other dogs.

Convalescing dogs or those that have recovered may shed the virus through their urine for several months. Puppies are especially at risk although dogs of all ages are susceptible. In the fatal form affected dogs can suddenly become ill developing bloody diarrhoea, collapsing and dying.

CANINE DISTEMPER

This is a virus similar to the germ that causes measles in people and of all the infectious dog diseases it causes the most deaths in dogs world wide. Canine Distemper can live for many years in a frozen state. During spring, the virus thaws out perhaps accounting for the higher incidence of distemper during that season.

This disease can attack virtually all the dog's body tissues and so has a wide range of symptoms. Younger and poorly nourished or ill kept dogs are more susceptible to this virus. Symptoms start with a high fever and loss of appetite with a watery discharge from the eyes and nose. This is accompanied by coughing, vomiting and/or diarrhea with the dog being very lethargic.

CANINE PARVOVIRUS

This disease has a special affinity for attacking rapidly reproducing cells - such as those lining the intestinal tract and bone marrow, lymph nodes and heart. The virus is transmitted from one dog to another via contaminated droplets and faeces.

It can also be carried on the dog's hair and feet, as well as contaminated cages, shoes and other objects. Dogs of all ages are affected, but the highest mortality occurs among puppies less than five months of age. There are two main syndromes.

DIARRHEA SYNDROME (ENTERITIS)

After an incubation period of 7 - 14 days, the first signs are severe depression with loss of appetite, followed by vomiting. The dog appears to be in severe pain, with a tucked up abdomen. Within 24 hours a high fever develops and profuse diarrhoea that is frequently bloody.

CARDIAC SYNDROME (MYOCARDITIS)

This form of Parvovirus affects the heart muscle, especially in puppies less than three months of age. Puppies with myocarditis stop nursing, cry out and gasp for breath. Death can occur suddenly or in a few days. Puppies that recover sometimes develop a chronic form of congestive heart failure that leads to death in weeks or months.

CLEANING INFECTED QUARTERS

The quarters where an infected dog is or has been kept should be cleaned and thoroughly disinfected. This is an extremely hardy virus that resists most household cleaners. The best disinfectant is Clorox (one part to thirty parts of water).

INFECTIOUS TRACHEBRONCHITIS (KENNEL COUGH)

This is a highly contagious disease of dogs that spreads rapidly through a kennel. A harsh dry cough is the characteristic sign of the illness. The cough may persist for many weeks and become a chronic problem due to secondary infection. A number of viruses have been implicated in the kennel cough complex. Two of these are immunised against through the normal yearly vaccination from your veterinarian.

INTERNAL PARASITES

Roundworm: Dogs are easily infected with roundworm from their environment which is often contaminated from other dogs. Puppies are almost always born with roundworm infections acquired from their mother during her pregnancy. A heavy infestation can affect a puppy's health, symptoms are coughing, vomiting, pot belly and diarrhoea. Worms are white in colour and will often be seen in vomit material or the dog's droppings. **Hookworm:** Although much smaller than the roundworm, the hookworm can have a serious affect on your dog's health. Hookworms live in the intestine of the dog and feed on blood, and for this reason a severe infection can cause anaemia, weakness and even death. The regular treatment of this worm is vital as re-infection can occur very quickly, especially during warm humid times of the year. Puppies can also be affected through their mother's milk while nursing. **Whipworm:** Named whipworm because of its resemblance to a stock whip, this worm is only a problem to dogs over the age of 12 weeks. Infected dogs can develop an unpleasant smelly diarrhoea which may include blood flecks, and in acute cases can cause death. The worm is passed via the dog's droppings and the eggs can remain viable for long periods.

The Flea Tapeworm: This tapeworm infects 70% of dogs. Infection occurs when the dog rooms itself and swallows a flea ripe with a tapeworm larva. Symptoms to look for are the dog "scooting" (rubbing its bottom on the ground) due to irritation caused by the tapeworms. **Treatment for Worms:** Ideally older dogs should be treated with a full spectrum wormer every three months. Puppies should be treated every two weeks until three months of age, then monthly until six months, and from then on treat as for an adult dog. Treat pregnant bitches every three weeks during pregnancy and while nursing.

TRAVEL SICKNESS

Many dogs suffer from travel sickness, but you can help, firstly getting your dog used to sitting in a stationary car. Don't feed your dog before a journey. Take your dog on short trips, slowly increasing the length until it is used to travelling this way.