
Hundreds of dogs in Pontiac, Inkster (MI) PARVO

Posted by maobao - 2009/08/08 08:43

Of course permission to cross post. Geez I've been expecting an outbreak in the south; not MI

<http://www.freep.com/article/20090803/NEWS06/908030326>

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Hundreds of dogs in Pontiac, Inkster dying in parvo outbreak

Unvaccinated pets living outdoors most vulnerable

BY DAVID ASHENFELTER
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Hundreds of dogs, mainly puppies, are dying in Pontiac and Inkster because of an outbreak of parvovirus, a virulent disease that is easy to prevent and expensive to treat, veterinarians and animal protection workers said Sunday.

"This is the worst outbreak I've seen in Pontiac in the 20 years I've been working here," said Pam Porteous, manager of the Animal Care Network, which operates in Pontiac and Inkster. She said she has been told by shelter workers that Detroit and Flint have outbreaks, too.

She said her group has been averaging 20 calls a day this summer from pet owners whose dogs have come down with the malady. Dogs are infected by contact with feces from contaminated dogs and often die three days after symptoms appear.

Porteous said some 300 dogs have died in Pontiac alone this summer.

Porteous said low-income communities are more vulnerable because dog owners can't afford the vaccinations and are more likely to keep dogs outside, where they may be infected by stray dogs.

Tonya Ellis thinks a stray dog contaminated her dog, Layla. The 3-month-old golden Labrador-pit bull mix, who'd been partially vaccinated, was put to sleep last month after four days of vomiting and diarrhea.

"She was my baby," said Ellis, a married mother of two. "It was like losing a child."

Yearly vaccinations can prevent disease

Ellis said she did everything right, yet her 3-month-old puppy still fell victim last month to the dreaded parvovirus that is killing hundreds of puppies and adult dogs in low-income communities in metro Detroit.

"She had three parvo vaccinations, but not the fourth because she wasn't old enough," Ellis said Sunday, describing the horrific vomiting and diarrhea that forced her to have Layla, a golden Labrador-pit bull mix, put to sleep.

Ellis said she still cries over the loss.

Porteous said thousands of other puppies in metro Detroit, like Layla, remain vulnerable to the disease until they receive their fourth vaccination at 15 weeks. She said adult dogs are vulnerable, too, unless they receive annual parvo vaccinations.

The parvovirus outbreak has mainly affected Pontiac and Inkster this summer, where at least 300 dogs have died. She said shelter workers in Detroit and Flint have reported similar outbreaks.

Porteous said low-income communities are especially vulnerable because residents often can't afford to vaccinate their puppies -- shots cost \$10 to \$80 each -- and because they typically keep their pets outside as watchdogs, where the animals can be infected by stray dogs with the disease.

Her organization canvasses Pontiac and Inkster neighborhoods to monitor the disease and educate dog owners about how to prevent it. She said the virus is passed through dog feces and easily can be tracked into the yards and homes on shoes, car tires and paws.

"If I didn't have my dogs vaccinated, I could easily bring it home and give it to them because of the work I do," Porteous said. Parvo is not passed to humans.

Veterinarians said parvo can kill a puppy within 72 hours if it goes untreated.

An infected dog often shows the first symptoms when it stops eating. By the second day, the dog begins vomiting and experiencing diarrhea. By the third day, the diarrhea can become bloody.

"It's not a good death," Porteous said. "And little kids see it happen, and it's just heartbreaking."

Dr. Noni Greene of the Oakland Veterinary Referral Services, a 24-hour emergency care clinic in Pontiac, said it can cost \$1,500 to \$3,000 to treat a parvo-infected dog. She said her clinic claims a 90% success rate because the dogs receive round-the-clock care.

She agreed with Porteous that the most cost-effective way to protect dogs is to keep them vaccinated.

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Re: Hundreds of dogs in Pontiac, Inkster (MI) PARVO

Posted by Dian - 2009/08/14 11:25

Nasty stuff!

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