

# Common Contagious Illness and Disease in the Shelter

Knowing how to prevent spread of disease in the shelter is not always easy. Confirmed illnesses are easier to contain but there is a grey area with animals that are on watch or are exposed but not showing any signs of illness.

### **The importance of vaccinating**

Austin Pets Alive cannot stress the importance of vaccinating animals **immediately** on intake. Shelters that do not vaccinate on intake (DAPP, FVRCP, Bordetella) will see a prevalence of contagious illness, mainly distemper. Based on discussions on Veterinary Information Network and having had positive results at a shelter APA worked with, quarantining dogs for 3 days after the initial distemper vaccine, greatly reduced the virus in the incoming population.

### **How disease is spread**

There are several ways that diseases spread. The most common in shelters are:

1. Airborne - sneezing, coughing
2. Fomite - transmission on an object such as pens, door knobs, clothes, hands, shoes, etc
3. Fecal oral - poop to mouth such as butt sniffing, poop on the ground, poop on food bowls, etc
4. Bodily fluids - blood, saliva, urine, vomit
5. Hair follicles and direct contact (ringworm)

### **Keeping a safe distance**

In a shelter keeping animals a safe distance from each other is one of the most important things staff and volunteers can and should do to prevent spread of disease. Keep animals a minimum of 3-5 feet from each other and farther if and when possible. Dogs being walked should not be able to touch or lick each other. Think about a person sneezing and how close you want to be from them (about 3-5 feet). Cats should not be able to play handies with each other between kennels if possible.

**\*\*ALL HEALTHY PUPPIES WILL EAT A MEATBALL OF FOOD. IF YOUR PUPPY IS NOT IT IS SICK WITH SOMETHING\*\***

# CHEAT SHEET for deadly diseases

## Parvovirus

**+Mode of transmission** - fecal oral, fomite

**+Symptoms** - bloody diarrhea, inappetence, vomiting. Diarrhea alone may not be a symptom but if a puppy is dumpy and having diarrhea suspect parvo

**+Action** - Test asap with parvo SNAP. Do not move them first. If positive consider yourself contaminated and use gowns, gloves, shoe covers when moving away from the area. If needed go home and change clothes/shoes.

**+Disinfection** - bleach, Trifectant, Rescue (Accel), Wysiwash

## Panleukopenia

**+Mode of transmission** - fecal oral, fomite

**+Symptoms** - vomiting is the main symptom with kittens but they will also have diarrhea and not eating, adults with questionable vaccine histories or newly vaccinated and are vomiting

**+Action** - Test asap with parvo SNAP. Do not move them first. If positive consider yourself contaminated. Touching as few objects as possible move to sink and wash hands up to elbows. Spray sink and clothes/shoes with Trifectant. Notify people where the cat was previously. Move cat to isolation area. Spray discovery area with Trifectant, let dry then clean.

**+Disinfection** - bleach, Trifectant, Rescue (Accel), pool shock, Wysiwash

## Calicivirus

**+Mode of transmission** - airborne, saliva, fomite

**+Symptoms** - oral ulcers (see photos below), sneezing and nasal discharge but hard to diagnose with no ulcers. Limping without trauma can be a symptom, check mouth

**+Action** - there is no in-house test, oral ulcers (see photos below) should be treated as calici. Consider yourself contaminated. Touching as few objects as possible move to sink and wash hands up to elbows. Spray sink and clothes/shoes with Trifectant. Notify people where the cat was previously. Move cat to isolation area. Spray discovery area with Trifectant, let dry then clean.

**+Disinfection** - bleach, Trifectant, Rescue (Accel), Wysiwash

## Distemper

**+Mode of transmission** - airborne, saliva, fomite

**+Symptoms** - green/yellow nasal discharge, ring of crust around eyes, pneumonia, twitching, seizures, fever, dandruff. Can be ANY symptom. Distemper affects all body systems. Can manifest in almost any way. ANY combination of these should be considered distemper.

**+Action** - get the dog away from other dogs as quickly as possible. Wear gowns, gloves, shoe covers if needed. Cover the dogs head and carry to isolation area. Dogs should NOT be housed in the same building as dogs that do not have distemper. Ideally all distemper or distemper suspect dogs move into foster homes asap.

**+Disinfection** - bleach, Trifectant, Rescue (Accel), Wysiwash

**These illnesses and symptoms should be known by all staff members involved in animal handling or are coordinating intake with other shelters.**

# Cutting Corners - Why it's deadly

Set the bar high and keep it there. Once cutting corners starts it will be very VERY hard to go back and all it takes is one person.

- Staff HAS to wash hands up to elbows between animals. They may not have realized that Cali the cat sniffed their arm but if she goes and handles Fluffy there is your spread of disease. Most often spread of disease happens when your not thinking about it and we don't always think about it so make it a routine.
- Wear a gown when holding or carrying dogs with unknown history and wash hands immediately after.
- Remove ALL organic matter before cleaning/bleaching.
- Wipe doors, knobs, chairs, counters, and mop regularly.
- Disinfect areas where sick animals were: lobby, parvo (bleach everything even the ground outside)
- Bleach alone doesn't work you have to use a detergent first. Cleaners like Trifectant and Rescue are a detergent and disinfectant. Check your cleaner.
- Consider yourself 100% contaminated if you came in contact with a contagious disease. In cases like parvo you may need to go home or send staff home to change and come back. Consider keeping extra clothes on hand.
- Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated animals should not be allowed to interact unless purposely housed together.

## Most important

- Keep all dogs, even healthy dogs, AT LEAST 15 feet from each other. Do NOT let them lick, sneeze, or breathe on each other. If possible keep dogs approximately 20ft from each other.
- Wash hands up to elbows between animals.
- VACCINATE ON INTAKE!
- Treat panleuk, calici, parvo, distemper like they are the plague!
- Establish a No Cuddle policy. Cuddling animals spreads disease.
- Litter box scoopers should get