



## Mysterious Respiratory Illness Affecting Dogs

BY: SAMANTHA BARTLETT, DVM

Veterinarians have been reporting severe respiratory illness in dogs with higher than usual mortality rates. To date, no common cause of the illness has been identified by pathologists and much debate has occurred as to whether a new form of disease has developed or a lifestyle change has made dogs more susceptible to disease. Preliminary research at the New Hampshire Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory has suggested the illnesses may be caused by an unculturable bacteria known to cause respiratory illness in humans in 2021.

The disease is being referred to as Atypical Canine Infectious Respiratory Disease Complex (aCIRDC). Over 200 cases have been reported in Oregon, but there is no official count for the country. So far, potential cases have been reported in 16 states according to Louisiana State University. These states include California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Nevada, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington.

Symptoms have included mild to moderate tracheobronchitis lasting 6 weeks or longer that does not respond to traditional antibiotics, chronic pneumonia that does not respond to antibiotics or acute rapidly progressing pneumonia leading to poor outcomes in 24-36 hours.

One theory is that many dogs have less protection against respiratory disease due to the unique situation of the COVID-19 emergency that led to less vaccination and socialization of dogs. In particular, vaccinations against Bordetella and Canine Influenza dropped during the past few years.

At this time, the AVMA is recommending that pet parents keep their dogs updated on vaccines and bring their dog to the vet if showing respiratory symptoms, particularly if the dog is elderly, brachycephalic or otherwise immune compromised.

# Telehealth and the Veterinary-Client-Patient-Relationship

BY: SAMANTHA BARTLETT, DVM

Several state legislatures and veterinary medical boards are examining the issue of whether establishing a veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) must be established through and in-person physical exam or if the VCPR can be established solely through electronic consultation (telehealth). Many veterinarians feel that telehealth has a place, but that it shouldn't replace in person care particularly for pets that do not have regular veterinary care.

The FDA stance is that a VCPR cannot be established through telemedicine. The District of Columbia and 43 states have followed the stance of the FDA and require in-person examinations to establish the VCPR. Kentucky re-evaluated their VCPR requirement this year and asked the opinion of members of the Kentucky Veterinary Medical Association (KVMA) throughout the state. The overwhelming majority of the KVMA membership that responded to the survey (over 85% of the total membership) agreed a VCPR should be established in person and renewed every 12 months.

Six states changed their veterinary practice acts to allow a VCPR to be established without an in-person examination. These states include Arizona, California, New Jersey, Virginia, Idaho and Vermont. All of these states have stipulations on prescribing and when an in-person examination is required. Arkansas, Florida and Michigan were unsuccessful in passing legislation about virtual VCPR requirements this year.

A recent study conducted by the AVMA entitled, 2023 Pet Owner Attitude Survey, found that pet owners prefer to establish the VCPR in person as opposed to virtually. Pet owners also indicated they prefer their pet's care be overseen by a veterinarian rather than a licensed non-veterinarian.

The survey was developed to get a better understanding of pet owner's perceptions and attitudes following the COVID-19 pandemic and veterinary trends stemming from that time period. Notably, the push to eliminate in-person exams to establish a VCPR and the suggestion that a new mid-level employee position be created to take over some of the duties historically relegated to a veterinarian.

The findings are as follows:

- 88% of pet owners feel that a physical exam by a veterinarian and in-person conversation is the best standard of care.
- 79% of pet owners would prefer that a veterinarian lead their pet's healthcare.
- 76% feel their pet's health and safety is a priority for veterinary care
- 72% of pet owners want to meet a veterinarian in person before allowing them to care for their pet
- 80% of pet owners feel it would be dangerous for anyone other than a licensed veterinarian to make recommendations about life-or-death decisions for their pets.

The survey was available from September 8-14 and was completed by 1000 pet owners in the United States.

The AVMA is opposed to telemedicine without the presence of an in-person VCPR unless in the case of emergency triage. The AVMA has joined over 50 other member organizations to form the Coalition for Connected Veterinary Care (CCVC) to protect the integrity of the VCPR but acknowledge the benefit of telehealth to animal patients.

The CCVC is concerned with many e-commerce conglomerates pushing telemedicine as a platform to sell high-profit pharmaceuticals to pet owners. Many online corporations have already expanded into telehealth such as Chewy and Walmart. Amazon is also considering a move into veterinary telehealth to compete with Walmart. According to Senate disclosure reports, Amazon has spent over \$400,000 on lobbying targeting telemedicine and the Food and Drug Administration. Whether these funds were solely for human or pet health, or both, is unknown.

## Elanco Develops Targeted Treatment for Canine Parvovirus

BY: SAMANTHA BARTLETT, DVM

Elanco announced it has developed a monoclonal antibody treatment for canine parvovirus designed to shorten disease duration and reduce the severity of symptoms. The single-dose intravenous injection binds the virus directly and prevents invasion of the virus into the cell.

Canine Parvovirus Monoclonal Antibody currently only has conditional approval, but is available to veterinarians while full approval is pending. Elanco says they expect the USDA to grant full approval sometime in 2024. Elanco's efficacy study included 28 8-week-old puppies with a 0% mortality rate from parvovirus. The drug is shown to be safe for puppies as young as 6 weeks of age.

The drug is currently part of the parvo protocol at The Fix Project, a non-profit clinic in Long Beach, California that specializes in parvovirus. Staff members there have seen great results with an average hospitalization of 3-5 days vs 5-7 days with just supportive care. The successfulness of the treatment is not only a satisfying outcome for pet owners, but has had a positive impact on the mental health of the staff as well.

## Research Shows COVID-19 Infection Can Damage the Brain in Dogs

BY: SAMANTHA BARTLETT, DVM

Konkuk University in South Korea recently published a study in Emerging Infectious Diseases. The study found that dogs experimentally infected with SARS-CoV-2 Delta variant that were not showing any neurologic or respiratory signs of the disease did have pathologic evidence of degenerative brain disease on necropsy.

The researchers infected six dogs with the virus intranasally. The dogs were placed in shared cages with six non-infected dogs. The control group was three uninfected dogs treated with placebo. Blood, nose-throat, mouth-throat, and fecal samples were tested at 10, 12, 14-, 38-, 40- and 42-days post infection.

Viral titers appeared higher in the nasal and oral mucosa of contact dogs than infected dogs. Dogs in the contact group had more severe inflammation in the trachea and bronchioles in early stages of infection. This is consistent with previous studies showing that contact transmission has higher viral concentrations in the upper respiratory tract.

SARS-CoV-2 DNA was detected in the brain at weeks 10, 12, and 14 postinfection. Necropsies at all



time points showed the virus had caused abnormal changes and damage to the blood-brain barrier and evidence that the virus had crossed the barrier.

Researchers conclude that this study suggests a potential for a long COVID-like syndrome in infected dogs. This research can also help with studies of how the disease affects humans.



## Education Key to Curbing Antimicrobial Resistance in Cats

BY: SAMANTHA BARTLETT, DVM

In an effort to understanding reasoning behind the choice to use cefovecin to treat cats vs an appropriate narrow-spectrum antibiotic, researchers surveyed cat owners and veterinarians. The results and analysis were published in a paper entitled, Divergent Veterinarian and Cat Owner Perspective are a Barrier to Reducing the Use of Cefovecin in Cats, which was published in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association (JAVMA).

Compared to cefovecin, oral antimicrobials are often more appropriate in their narrower spectrum and duration of treatment. Many times these antibiotics are also significantly less expensive to the pet owner. Cefovecin however, is viewed as more convenient to administer since it only requires one injection by the veterinary staff.

Typically a urinary tract infection requires five days of oral antibiotics compared to cefovecin which persists for up to two months at subtherapeutic levels, increasing the chances for development of antibiotic resistant organisms.

While it can be a struggle to administer oral medications to cats, the survey revealed that veterinarians believe that cat owners suffer more difficulty than reality. The survey revealed that 31% of cat owners had at least one cat in which pill administration was a struggle and 9% reported oral medication was impossible in their cat. When asked about liquid medications, 20% reported having a difficult time and 5% said it was impossible. When veterinarians were asked about cat owners medicating their pets, they estimated 60 % would find it difficult and 20% would find it impossible. This discrepancy in views could influence the veterinarian's choice to recommend cefovecin.

However, the study showed that when cat owners did have difficulty administering medication to their cats, only about 65% of them would talk to their veterinary staff to get tips for medicating. This opens an area of opportunity for veterinarians to proactively address medication tips and tricks and what to do if the pet owner can not get the medication into the cat. The survey also revealed that if cat owners were educated about the risk of antibiotic resistance with cefovecin compared to an oral antibiotic, they were more willing to try the oral antibiotic.

Another paper entitled, Pathways to Sustainable Antimicrobial Use in Cats, also published in JAVMA, discussed clients concerns with cost and the likelihood of declining culture and susceptibility testing. The authors of this paper suggested that lowering the cost of testing would make clients more likely to approve testing so the proper antibiotic could be selected for their pet's condition.



## RABIES TITER EVENT

The KCVMA is partnering with MVMA to provide rabies titer testing for members at the Midwest Veterinary Collaboration Conference on Sunday, February 4, 2024 at the Overland Park Convention Center. Please sign up if you would like to have your titer tested at this event. You are welcome to sign up additional KCVMA member DVMs from your clinic and support staff to have their titers tested as well.

The cost for testing is:

\$60 for DVM a member of both KCVMA and MVMA

\$110 for DVM a member of only KCVMA

\$70 for support staff (Added as a guest when registering)

### Classifieds

Send your classified ads to: Wanda Geis, PO Box 12468, Shawnee Mission, KS 66282-2468, or email them to [classifieds@kcvma.com](mailto:classifieds@kcvma.com). Classified ads will be run at the sole discretion of the editor and may be edited for content.

#### December 8, 2023

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