

Parvo outbreak forces SLT dog park closure

By Kathryn Reed

A rash of parvo cases in South Lake Tahoe has forced the city to shutdown the dog park for the next 10 days.

The Lake Tahoe Humane Society has reported 11 cases of the potentially fatal virus in the last 10 days.

“The fatality rate is huge if it goes untreated – almost 100 percent,” Niki Congero, executive director of the South Shore humane society, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The earlier someone catches it, the better chance the dog has to survive.”

The initial signs are lethargy, diarrhea – including blood in it, loss of appetite, then vomiting.

“It is like the worst kind of stomach flu,” Congero said.

Because the incubation period is seven to 10 days, that is why the dog park will be off limits that long. The city will thoroughly clean everything to ensure the transfer of the virus is not possible. One of the dogs with parvo had been at the dog park on Al Tahoe Boulevard.

It is easy for dogs to transfer the virus to one another. Usually it is through feces, just by sniffing it and getting a little on their nose, or stepping in it.

“You could go to one house, get a dog hair, go to another house and the dog hair comes off and that dog could get it,” Congero said in describing the ease with which parvovirus spreads.

“If everyone picked up their poop, this problem would not exist.”

It can spread to the coyote population, too. It is not, however, transmittable to cats or people.

Treatment includes fluids and antibiotics.

But Congero stresses it's a lot cheaper to spend money to vaccinate dogs. Puppies should get a series of shots starting at 8 weeks, then again at 1 year, which is good for three years. Adult dogs need to keep up with the vaccinations just like other preventative care.

At boarding facilities in the area they all make sure a dog's vaccinations are up-to-date before they are allowed in. Parvo, distemper and rabies are the big three for doggie day care centers.

"Anyone that comes in with any sickness, we turn them back away," Paige Rice, owner of Tahoe Best Friends, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

People suspecting their dog has parvo should immediately call their vet. Do not go in with the dog because the vet will want to take precautions so other animals are not put in harm's way.