

Infectious Canine Hepatitis (ICH)

Infectious canine hepatitis is a disease which affects the liver, kidneys, eyes and lungs of a dog. The disease can develop very quickly and some individuals may die within hours of becoming unwell.

Who is at risk?

Dogs are most commonly affected in the first year of life, but unvaccinated dogs of all ages are susceptible.

How is it spread?

It is transmitted by direct contact with infected urine, saliva and faeces. Furthermore, dogs that have recovered from this disease can still be infectious to other dogs for more than six months. Young puppies are particularly susceptible to the disease. The virus is relatively hardy and can survive for months in the environment under ideal conditions.

Cause of infectious canine hepatitis

Infectious canine hepatitis is caused by canine adenovirus-1 (CAV-1), which is found world-wide and can infect most canine species, although some, including the domestic dog, are more sensitive than others.

Signs and symptoms

Clinical signs develop after an incubation period of 4-7 days and most commonly include lack of appetite, fever, pale gums, conjunctivitis, coughing, abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhoea. Sometimes, the dog may later develop jaundice. In some dogs that recover, a clouding of the cornea occurs, known as 'blue eye' which usually resolves itself over time. Occasionally the disease is so severe as to cause sudden death before any signs have developed.

Prevention and control

The best form of protection against this virus is through vaccination.

You'll be pleased to know that some vaccines offer a duration of immunity of three years, this means your dog will have immunity for a full three years.