

## **Handout: Caring for a Recovered Distemper Dog**

This dog has been diagnosed with Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) and has been given supportive care while in the shelter. Canine Distemper Virus is specific to dogs and some wildlife but is not contagious to cats or humans. Symptoms of CDV include respiratory signs (nasal discharge, coughing), gastrointestinal signs (diarrhea, vomiting), skin changes (thickened paw pads and nasal planum), teeth (enamel hypoplasia), and neurologic signs (tremors, seizures).

Laboratory testing (PCR) has been performed regularly to diagnose and monitor viral loads. The viral load detected in this patient's samples has started to decline indicating this dog is in the recovery period of the disease. **Newly published research substantiates the release of distemper-positive dogs from isolation after their viral loads start to decrease even though they are still testing positive on repeat PCR testing.** Research indicates they are no longer contagious after this viral peak has passed.

Once in the recovery stage, new development of symptoms is unlikely, but we recommend monitoring your dog for any problems and seek veterinary care if problems are noted.

We recommend that all dogs in your home be up to date on vaccinations, including DHPP. Adult dogs with two or more DHPP vaccines with at least one week since the last vaccination are at minimal risk of contracting distemper, even when exposed to a positive dog.

### **Research Updates for Your Veterinarian**

The shelter medicine team at the University of Wisconsin has updated clinical management guidelines of canine distemper virus to allow for the release of dogs from isolation after viral counts have passed the peak viral load. After this peak, dogs are no longer thought to be contagious to other dogs. This pattern of PCR positivity despite no longer being contagious is similar to human measles, a virus to which distemper is closely related.

Review the published research here:

Allen C, Ellis A, Liang R, Lim A, Newbury S. Prolonged persistence of canine distemper virus RNA, and virus isolation in naturally infected shelter dogs. PLoS One. 2023 Jan 20;18(1):e0280186. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0280186. PMID: 36662900; PMCID: PMC9858347.