

A Whirlwind of a Week (3-31-17)

It was a whirlwind of a week.

Parvovirus at a dog kennel triggered calls, emails and requests for interviews. In response to the first television station asking for an interview, I said, “This is not television news worthy.” It is not that the topic did not matter but when there are so many bigger problems in the world and the local problem is being appropriately handled, well, maybe it does not need to be on TV. A true whistle blower situation is different. Nothing is being done. People are sweeping a serious problems under the rug. Laws are not being followed. In those cases, somebody needs to blow that whistle.

Parvovirus is in the environment. It was first noticed in the U.S. in the 70’s. According to Dr. Becker, at the WebMD site, “It’s not just warm weather and outdoor activities that bring the risk of parvovirus. Unvaccinated [puppies imported from other countries](#) are also linked to an increasing number of reported cases in the U.S.”

Halifax’s situation provided a great educational opportunity for many of us. If your dog is not vaccinated for this virus, you can expose your dog to it at every dog park. You can bring it home and deliver it to others on your footwear. Yet, the vaccination is not a state requirement. So, many people who own dogs, yet can’t afford veterinary care, well, their dogs may not have been vaccinated. That is one way it can spread to the environment. It is passed along through the dog’s feces and remains in the soil for months.

Then, we also have the anti-vaccine movement among pet owners, just as there is among parents not wanting vaccines for their children. It is, in fact, a personal choice, whether or not you approve or agree with that.

For those choosing the vaccine for the parvovirus, it can’t be administered until the puppy is 6 to 8 weeks old. ASPCA recommends that owners of puppies not bring that little one out into public spaces until four months old and the vet has confirmed immunity through a blood test (checking the “titer”). Now, I ask you, how often have you seen people walking a tiny puppy in public and the puppy is receiving all kinds of attention? (How can we help but notice these little love magnets?) Did you know that not only is that infant dog at risk for this virus, but

we, the innocent patter, hugger, greeter can also put that young one at risk by our contact?

That is the case because objects can easily carry this hardy virus around for weeks and months. In epidemiology, non-living things carrying disease are called fomites. They aren't alive but they transport living problematic stuff, such as this virus. It can be the boots, the doorknob, the leash, the collar.

This virus is carried by other members of the canine family such as coyotes and fox. We know they are not vaccinated. So, it is out there in the environment and any dog owner who does not vaccinate their pet against this potentially deadly virus, is not protecting their canine friend and is helping to spread the disease. It was a lesson for all of us and I am grateful to our Animal Inspector for spending many hours checking every single dog, the environment and establishing and confirming sanitation protocols.

The week quickly moved on to human illnesses. I crossed paths with addiction and the mental illness that allows people to live in filth, Diogenese Syndrome. Both are sad situations. Both can be treated but require cooperation on the part of the person with the illness. This type of situation approaches the blurry line between private and public health. When children are involved, some action has to be taken. A conscience mandates that. If the house and/or yard are causing a rodent infestation, action has to be taken; that is public health.

Calls were made to protect a child. A conversation was initiated with the parents. Time will tell what needs to be done.

Sometimes one whirlwind leads to another before it settles down.

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