

Dog virus outbreak in Halifax, Annapolis Valley

Last Updated: Friday, August 11, 2006 | 10:05 AM AT

[CBC News](#)

Dog owners in Halifax and the Annapolis Valley are being warned of an outbreak of canine parvovirus, a disease that can be fatal.

The highly contagious disease affects mainly puppies and can be transferred through feces and saliva.

"It just makes them very sick: lethargic, diarrhea, vomiting," said SPCA spokesperson Judith Gass. "Oftentimes you lose them, and fairly quickly."

Treatment of the disease can cost close to \$1,000, but without it, 80 per cent of infected puppies will die. Even with prompt treatment, however, the virus can be fatal.

The outbreak has been traced to at least two sources: a Pet's Unlimited store in Dartmouth and a woman from Digby known only as Gail, who sells puppies through newspaper ads and on the roadside.

Vaccines offer limited protection

Gass says she doesn't know how many puppies are affected, but advises anyone who got a puppy with the virus in the last six weeks to give them a call.

"We don't want unsuspecting purchasers to be buying puppies that turn out to be very sick," she said.

"It's not only expensive ... but very disappointing to them and also distressful for the animals involved as well. So we just want to stop the disease from spreading."

Gass is asking the public to take note of roadside dog vendors.

"Get a licence number so that we can go back and trace the source and make sure that the premises where the puppies are kept are cleaned up appropriately so that the disease does not spread," said Gass.

Gass says vaccines will protect older dogs, but for puppies, and certain vulnerable breeds, shots will offer only limited protection.