

## ***K9 Health Information***

### **CANINE WARTS (Papilloma virus)**

#### **What are canine warts?**

Canine warts are benign clusters of abnormal cells caused by the papilloma virus. The virus can only be transmitted between dogs and is not contagious to people or other pets. The following dogs tend to be most susceptible due to an immature or suppressed immune system:

- Puppies under 2 years of age
- Dogs taking steroids for allergies  
or other immune irregularity
- Senior Dogs



#### **How do dogs contract warts?**

Papilloma virus is transferred by oral contact while playing, sharing toys, water bowls, or grooming instruments.

#### **How can I tell if my dog has warts?**

The most common location for warts is in the mouth, lips and/or gums. They often have the appearance of cauliflower- see picture. They can also appear on the abdomen and in older dogs, they can be found anywhere on the skin.

#### **What can I do to prevent & treat warts?**

It's assumed all dogs will be exposed to the papilloma virus, though they only flare up when the immune system isn't functioning at 100%. Unfortunately there is no vaccine or prevention for this virus, though most cases do not require treatment. The immune system fights the virus; the warts will fall off on their own within 1 to 5 months and the dog remains immune to further infections. Feeding a healthy diet with frequent exercise can help keep your dog's immune system strong and healthy. If you are concerned, you may want to check with your veterinarian for other options.

#### **Can my dog still come to daycare if they have warts?**

Yes! While the warts are indeed contagious, preventing the spread of the virus in a group with close contact is just not possible. The incubation period can be 1-2 months, so if your dog has visible warts, they contracted the virus some time ago and can be contagious up to 2 months after the lesions are gone.

With that in mind, contracting the virus is possible with any dog-dog interaction, removing a dog with warts from the group is not effective in preventing further spread or exposure. Isolation is not practical; especially with young dogs during their key developmental period. We believe that the social and behavioural benefits of daycare play far outweigh the risk of contracting this harmless virus. We have consulted with several veterinarians on this matter and they agree with and support this approach.