

CANINE INFLUENZA

A new strain of canine influenza virus (CIV) hit the Chicago area in March, 2015 and since that time there have been several outbreaks throughout the region. As of December, 2015, canine influenza has been deemed endemic in the Chicago area, meaning the virus remains in the area. Because canine influenza has not been widely reported in the Chicago area in the past, many dogs have no immunity and will become ill if exposed.

The following FAQs are primarily taken from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Veterinary Medical Association's websites (www.cdc.gov and www.avma.org).

What is canine influenza (dog flu)?

Dog flu is a contagious respiratory disease in dogs caused by a Type A influenza virus referred to as a "canine influenza virus." There are two different dog flu viruses: H3N8 which was first diagnosed in 2004 and H3N2 which emerged in Asia in 2006 and was first discovered in the U.S. in 2015. Both are diseases of dogs, not of humans.

What are the signs of this infection in dogs?

The signs of this illness in dogs are cough, runny nose and fever, however, a small proportion of dogs can develop severe disease.

How serious is this infection in dogs?

This is a relatively new cause of disease in dogs so nearly all dogs are susceptible to infection. Most infected dogs will become ill to varying degrees, a few dogs will have asymptomatic infections (no signs). Some dogs will experience severe illness characterized by pneumonia and will require hospitalization and a small percentage of these cases will die.

How does dog flu spread?

Canine influenza virus can be spread to other dogs by direct contact with aerosolized respiratory secretions from infected dogs, by uninfected dogs coming into contact with contaminated objects, and by moving contaminated objects

or materials between infected and uninfected dogs. Therefore, dog owners whose dogs are coughing or showing other signs of respiratory disease should not expose other dogs to the virus. Clothing, equipment, surfaces, and hands should be cleaned and disinfected after exposure to dogs showing signs of respiratory disease.

Is there a test for canine influenza?

Testing to confirm canine influenza virus infection is available. Your veterinarian can tell you if testing is appropriate. The tests can be performed using respiratory secretions collected at the time of disease onset or using two blood samples; the first collected while the animal is sick and the second 2 to 3 weeks later.

How is canine influenza treated?

Treatment largely consists of supportive care. In the milder form of the disease, this care may include medication to make your dog more comfortable and fluids to ensure that your dog remains well-hydrated. Broad spectrum antibiotics may be prescribed by your veterinarian if a secondary bacterial infection is suspected.

Is there a vaccine for canine influenza?

Yes, approved vaccines are available for each strain. The vaccination is not immediately effective nor will it help a dog that has already been exposed. Two vaccines must be given 2-4 weeks apart and the dog is not protected until 2 weeks after the second vaccination. It is not known whether there is cross protection between strains but it is unlikely. Talk with your veterinarian to see if and which vaccination is appropriate for your pet.

What is the risk to humans from this virus?

While this virus infects dogs and spreads between dogs, there is no evidence that this virus infects humans.

Our Mission

Building a community of caring by helping pets and educating people.

Website

www.anticruelty.org

Adoption Center/Animal Shelter

510 North LaSalle Street
Chicago, Illinois 60654

Adoption Hours

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10 a.m.-6 p.m.
365 days a year

Mailing Address

157 West Grand Avenue
Chicago, IL 60654

Phone (312) 644-8338

Fax (312) 644-3878

Behavior Helpline

(312) 644-8338, ext. 343

CANINE INFLUENZA VIRUS VACCINE

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Why was the vaccine developed?

The vaccine was developed to provide more comprehensive respiratory protection for dogs. The first canine flu H3N8 vaccine was licensed in 2010, the H3N2 vaccination became available in late 2015.

Is the vaccine effective?

The vaccine has been shown to significantly decrease the signs, severity, and spread of CIV infection. It does not completely prevent disease but it will reduce the duration and severity of coughing, protect against the formation and severity of lung lesions and significantly reduce the duration and degree of viral shedding (the amount of virus of infecting other dogs). This last point is critical in containing or ending an outbreak.

Is the vaccine safe?

The evidence shows that there is a very low percentage (0.01%) of complications in dogs given the vaccination. This is comparable to those seen with other canine vaccines. Most of those reactions are mild such as soreness, decrease in appetite, or allergic reaction. Very few required veterinary treatment.

Which dogs should be vaccinated against CIV?

Your veterinarian can advise you if you should consider vaccination and which vaccine is appropriate. “Social” dogs (those that attend day care, frequent dog parks, are in boarding facilities) are at higher risk. Dogs as young as 6 weeks can be vaccinated.

What is the vaccination protocol?

Two doses of the vaccination must be administered 2-4 weeks apart and the dog is not protected until 2 weeks after the second vaccination. Currently, an annual booster is recommended for dogs that continue to be at risk.

Will the vaccine prevent the disease if my dog has already been exposed?

No, adequate protection is not seen for 7-10 days after the second dose.

Are there new strains of canine flu each year, as there are with human flu?

To date, no new strains have been detected.

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