



Canine Influenza Fact Sheet

The PIJAC Zoonosis Committee has become aware of a high incidence of canine influenza in the Chicago area. The Committee has directed PIJAC to share this information throughout the industry and raise awareness while encouraging others to be on alert for potential outbreaks.

Dr. Donna Alexander, Director of Cook County Department of Animal and Rabies Control, is working closely with the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association. Based upon the preliminary data from Chicago area veterinarians that has been reviewed and compiled by her through March 31, 2015, Dr. Alexander has stated, "We can report that there have been over 1,113 cases of CIRDC since January and 5 mortalities. The age of the animals presenting vary but show more severe forms in dogs under 1 year of age and greater than 7 years of age."

Pet owners should contact their veterinarian immediately if they see any of the following symptoms in their dog(s):

- persistent, hacking cough;
- lethargic behavior;
- a poor appetite;
- nasal discharge;
- trouble breathing; or
- a fever.

Testing for canine influenza is available, and best results are obtained from samples taken very early in the onset of the illness. Sick dogs should be isolated from other animals.

Dr. Brendan McKiernan, Director of the University of Illinois Veterinary Teaching Hospital in Urbana and internationally renowned specialist in respiratory diseases of dogs and cats, states that "Avoidance of exposure is the name of the game for now."

Due to the high risk of canine influenza virus spreading from dog to dog, pet owners should not allow their dogs to either socialize with other dogs or participate in any group dog training activities. Pet owners are advised to not board their dogs at kennels and to avoid doggie day care, dog parks, and grooming facilities at this time.

In addition to the canine influenza virus being transmitted directly from dog to dog, the virus can live on hard surfaces and fabric materials making these items contaminated as well. To help minimize the spread of disease, it is also crucial that everyone should observe basic sanitation protocols, such as washing hands after touching animals or handling any items like food bowls, water bowls, toys, crates, and cages.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is canine influenza?

Canine influenza is a highly contagious respiratory infection of dogs caused by a novel influenza A subtype H3N8 virus that was first discovered in 2004.

2. What are the clinical signs of canine influenza?

Dogs of any breed, age or health status are therefore susceptible to infection. Like influenza viruses for other species, CIV causes flu-like illness consisting of cough, sneezing, and nasal discharge. Virtually all exposed dogs become infected; about 80% develop flu-like illness, while another 20% do not become ill. Fortunately, most dogs recover within 2 weeks without any further health complications. However, some dogs progress to pneumonia, which is usually due to secondary bacterial infections. While the overall mortality rate for canine influenza is low, the secondary pneumonia can be life-threatening. There is no evidence for age or breed susceptibility for developing pneumonia during canine influenza. More information can be found on the CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/canine/>.

3. How is canine influenza transmitted?

As with other respiratory pathogens, the most efficient transmission occurs by direct contact with infected dogs and by aerosols generated by coughing and sneezing. The virus can also contaminate kennel surfaces, food and water bowls, collars and leashes, and the hands and clothing of people who handle infected dogs. Fortunately, the virus is easily inactivated by washing hands, clothes and other items with soap and water.

4. Is there a vaccine for canine influenza?

The canine influenza vaccine is a “lifestyle” vaccine, in that it is intended for dogs at risk for exposure to CIV, including those that participate in activities with many other dogs or are housed in communal facilities, particularly in communities where the virus is prevalent. Dogs that may benefit from canine influenza vaccination include those that are already receiving the kennel cough vaccine for Bordetella because the risk groups are the same. Dog owners should consult with their veterinarian to determine whether their dog’s lifestyle includes risk for exposure to CIV, and the protection provided by the canine influenza vaccine.



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