

Dog 101

Canine Influenza: The Dog Flu

Canine influenza (also known as the “dog flu”) is a highly contagious virus that can impact the health of your dog. Here’s some tips to protect your pet.

There are two strains of Influenza Type A known to affect dogs internationally:

1. H3N8, which broke out around 2004 in Florida and continues to cause sporadic disease
2. H3N2, a milder strain first seen in Chicago in 2015

How is this transmitted?

Transmission of canine influenza requires direct contact with an infected and contagious dog’s fresh nose and mouth secretions.

Environments where other dogs are present such as shelters, dog parks, boarding kennels, training classes, and doggie day cares put dogs at a higher risk of infection. By contrast,

dogs that spend most of their time at home or rarely come in contact with other dogs have a lower risk.

If your dog is regularly around other dogs in these kinds of places, do not let him or her socialize with coughing dogs and limit or prevent exposure if you suspect that another dog might be sick.

Symptoms of canine influenza (Dog Flu)

Dogs suffering with the mild form of influenza may develop the following symptoms:

- A soft, moist cough that persists anywhere from 10 to 30 days (though some can develop a dry cough similar to the traditional kennel cough caused by Bordetella)
- Lethargy, reduced appetite
- Low fever (under 103 degrees Fahrenheit)

Dogs with the severe form of influenza may develop the following symptoms:

- High fevers (104-106 degrees Fahrenheit)
- Clinical signs of pneumonia, such as difficulty breathing. Although fatal cases of pneumonia from infection with influenza have been reported in dogs, the fatality rate is less than 10%.

Are there vaccines for the dog flu?

As with human strains of the flu, canine influenza vaccinations are available for your dog. Consult with your veterinarian if you have questions about whether or not your dog should receive the influenza vaccine.

Here are some facts on vaccinations:

- Be sure the vaccine your dog receives contains both strains as vaccination for one strain does not help prevent another strain
- Full vaccination requires an initial shot, then a booster three weeks later
- A regular kennel cough vaccination will not prevent influenza

What to do if your dog gets sick

The dog flu is typically not dangerous; most dogs recover in two to three weeks. Treatment of sick dogs depends on their symptoms and how long they have been sick, but typically involves supportive care, fluids, cough suppressants, or even anti-viral medication.

Severely affected pets usually get antibiotics to prevent or treat pneumonia, and pneumonia cases often require hospitalization.

When

should I take my dog to a veterinarian?

- If your dog has any of the lifestyle risk factors mentioned in this article
- If your dog is feeling sick or has a cough

