

Canine Influenza

What is canine influenza?

Influenza viruses have traditionally been found to affect birds and some mammals, including humans. In the summer of 2004, outbreaks of a respiratory disease were reported among racing greyhounds in the U.S. This influenza (H3N8) virus had likely been circulating in horses before spreading to dogs. In April, 2015, an outbreak involving dogs in Chicago, IL was confirmed to be caused by a virus related to the Asian strains of canine influenza A (H3N2). Canine influenza tends to be seen in animal shelters, kennels, dog day care facilities and other locations where dogs come into close contact with one another. Canine influenza does not appear to be common among household pets.

How do dogs get canine influenza?

It is most likely spread from dog-to-dog by aerosol droplets (with coughing) or by a dog's direct contact with contaminated surfaces. It is possible for an infected dog to have no outward signs of infection yet actively shed the virus.

Can people get canine influenza?

To date there has been no evidence of dog-to-human transmission of this virus. People have been known to contract influenza from infected pigs and poultry, but this is extremely rare, and there is no evidence that this can happen with infected dogs.

Can my cat get canine influenza?

While H3N8 has not been shown to affect cats, H3N2 has caused infection and respiratory illness in felines in Asia.

Is there a vaccine for my dog?

Yes, there is a commercially available vaccine in the U.S. Current vaccines are made to protect against the H3N8 strain and it is unclear if this vaccine would protect against the new circulating strain (H3N2). However, owners should still consider vaccinating dogs that visit dog parks, are housed in kennels, or attend show events. Vaccination can reduce the incidence and severity of disease in dogs infected with H3N8, which continues to circulate in the U.S. Please consult your veterinarian to determine whether your dog should be vaccinated.

What are the clinical signs of infection in dogs?

Both strains can cause the following clinical signs. There are two general clinical syndromes – a mild form and a severe pneumonic form. The milder type is most common and is characterized by nasal discharge and a cough that persists for 10 to 21 days, despite therapy with antibiotics and cough suppressants. A low-grade fever may also be present. The severe type is less common and is characterized by pneumonia, high fever (104° to 106° F), and an increased respiratory rate. The mortality rate is from 1 to 5%.

What should I do if I think my dog may have canine influenza?

- Avoid bringing your dog into close contact with other dogs.
- Wash your hands and change your clothes if you work with or are exposed to sick dogs before handling your own pets.
- If your dog or cat is showing signs of influenza, contact your veterinarian for information about diagnosis, appropriate treatment, and prevention.

Is it safe to take my dog to a dog park?

Transmission of communicable diseases is possible in any area that dogs congregate, thus some risk exists. However, if your dog is healthy and has not had a recent respiratory infection pet owners should feel free to visit dog parks, kennels, or dog shows. You may want to talk to your veterinarian about vaccination if you frequent those locations.

How long does canine influenza virus survive in the environment?

Usually influenza viruses do not survive more than 24 to 48 hours in the environment. These viruses are inactivated or killed by commonly used disinfectants.

How can I get my dog tested for the canine virus?

Testing for the virus is available at the University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. Should dogs die of a respiratory infection, fresh and fixed tissue can be submitted for influenza virus screening.

Nasal and nasopharyngeal swabs can be taken in the dogs that are acutely ill. Ideally, samples should be collected on virus collection swabs with transport media (such as Stuart's or Hank's) or sterile swabs. Sterile swabs can be placed in a red top tube with 5 to 6 drops of sterile saline. Ship samples overnight on ice packs.

For additional submission guidelines, contact the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at 612-625-8787 or 800-605-8787 or go to <http://www.vdl.umn.edu/>

Any laboratory-confirmed case of canine influenza must be reported to the Minnesota Board of Animal Health at 651-296-2942.

Additional Information:

- [University of Minnesota Veterinary Medical Center](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Iowa State Center for Food Security & Public Health](#) (pdf)

This fact sheet is meant to provide basic information. For specific health concerns please contact your physician or veterinarian. Updated April 2015.