

ACCES for Pet Health

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Flu Season: What you should know about Canine Influenza

By Beth Guerra, DVM



Flu season is upon us. We worry about sending our children back to school in the midst of the human H1N1 virus, and we ourselves are concerned about illness in the workplace. An emerging flu virus has also been identified in dogs as recently as 2004.

The canine influenza virus (CIV) behaves much like a human virus, causing widespread illness. Although this virus is rarely fatal, transmission is rapid between dogs in shelters, pet stores, veterinary clinics, and boarding facilities. Unlike the human virus, there is no "flu season" for dogs and the disease is highly transmissible the entire year. All dogs are susceptible and because it is a new virus, minimal immunity exists at this point.

Transmission of the virus occurs directly through aerosolized respiratory secretions, or through fomites, which are objects in the environment that can harbor the virus. Incubation is between 2-5 days; during this time nasal shedding can occur. Clinical symptoms may not become apparent until 7-10 days after initial exposure to the virus.

Symptoms can range from mild to severe and can often mimic Bordatella bronchiseptica (commonly known as kennel cough). Your dog may experience nasal discharge, fever, lethargy, cough, and increased respiratory rate. Decreased appetite and weight loss can also occur.

Secondary bacterial pneumonia may develop in severely compromised animals. Because these symptoms are non-specific, it can be difficult to differentiate canine influenza virus from other causes of upper respiratory symptoms.

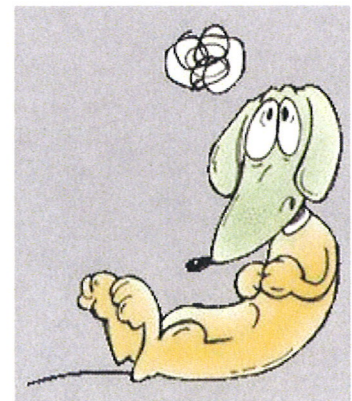
The infection may be mild and self-limiting, in which case you should provide rest, proper nutrition, and hydration, and isolate your dog from social settings. For more severe symptoms, more aggressive care may be indicated. Therapy is aimed at preventing secondary infection rather than a cure, for which there is none. Your veterinarian may recommend IV fluid support or antibiotics if indicated. There are no quick tests for diagnosing this disease, but a PCR test has been developed to identify the virus.



You can protect your dog by getting the Canine Influenza vaccine from your veterinarian.

In July of this year, Schering-Plough began manufacturing a vaccine for CIV. In dogs that are to be boarded or in other social situations, this vaccine should be considered in addition to the Bordatella, parainfluenza, and adenovirus-2 vaccines, which are currently routine. The best prevention is isolating affected or exposed animals, as dogs that harbor and are actively shedding the virus may not be exhibiting clinical symptoms.

If your dog has been exposed to a potentially infected population, or develops any of the aforementioned symptoms, please make an appointment with your veterinarian for an exam.



If your dog gets sick the best course of action may be simple rest. If symptoms are severe or continue for a long time, see your veterinarian.

Posted by **Christina Ryan** at October 7, 2009 5:25 p.m.

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