



Important Information about Canine Influenza or Dog Flu for Pet Owners

Many pet owners have contacted us about Canine Influenza, so we have created this quick reference guide to help answer many of your questions.

What is Canine Influenza?

Canine Influenza Virus (CIV), or dog flu, is a highly contagious respiratory infection in dogs. What is unique about the virus we are currently seeing in the Atlanta area is that it is not the typical dog flu strain (H3N8) that is treated nationwide. The strain causing the 2015 outbreak in Georgia (H3N2) is the same strain that afflicted thousands of dogs in the Chicago area. It almost genetically identical to an H3N2 strain previously reported only in Asia – specifically, Korea, China and Thailand.

Symptoms –

Mild form — The signs of Canine Influenza in its mild form look very similar to kennel cough. Dogs suffering with the mild form of canine influenza may have:

- a soft, moist cough or dry cough
- lethargy/lack of energy
- reduced appetite
- mild fever
- sneezing
- discharge from the eyes and/or nose
- thick nasal discharge (usually caused by a secondary bacterial infection)

If your pet has any of these symptoms talk to your veterinarian.

Severe form — Dogs with the severe form of canine influenza will have:

- high fevers (104°F to 106°F)
- clinical signs of pneumonia, such as increased respiratory rates and effort
- A small percentage of dogs will die from canine influenza. Dogs or other pets with these symptoms need immediate veterinary care.

How to avoid infection

Canine Influenza Virus is highly contagious. Virtually all dogs exposed to the virus become infected, and nearly 80% show clinical signs of disease, though most exhibit the mild form described above. CIV behaves in the same manner as the human flu virus, and similar measures should be taken to avoid it.

- Avoid contact with other dogs and places where dogs congregate such as boarding facilities, dog classes, grooming salons, dog parks and social events with other dogs present
- Don't allow your dog to drink from public water dishes
- Dogs with compromised immune systems, puppies, older or pregnant dogs are particularly at risk. Visit your veterinarian immediately if your dog fits any of these descriptions and shows any of the symptoms above.

Is there a vaccine?

CIV vaccines available today were created to protect against the common H3N8 strain. It is not known if the current vaccine will provide any protection from this new H3N2 virus.

Can it be treated?

Like with kennel cough, most dogs will recover quickly with supportive care. The veterinarian might prescribe medications, such as an antibiotic (to fight secondary infections) and/or a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory (to reduce fever, swelling, pain). Dehydrated pets may need fluid therapy to restore and maintain hydration. Other medications, or hospitalization, may also be necessary for more severe cases.

Am I at risk? What about my other pets?

There is no evidence that CIV is transmissible to people. The H3N2 strain has been reported to infect cats, and there's also some evidence that guinea pigs and ferrets can become infected.

More information on Canine Influenza Virus is available from the Georgia Veterinary Medical Association and can be found at www.GVMA.net.