

dog flu facts

The most important preventative measure
to take against canine influenza *aka* dog flu?

Education.

Canine influenza has now been reported in over 30 states after an outbreak flared up in 2016. As media reports of dog flu continue to rise we know that pet boarding facilities, doggy daycares, pet sitters, pet salons, and dog walkers are increasingly concerned about what they need to know to help ensure the health and well-being of the pets in their care. The following information is offered to help break through the flu fog for pet care services providers and their client pet owners.

What is canine influenza ?

Canine influenza is a highly contagious respiratory disease that is caused by canine influenza virus (CIV) Type A. There are 2 known strains in the United States:

1. CIV H3N8 - first reported in greyhounds in 2003. Since then, CIV H3N8 has spread to at least 41 states. This virus is of equine origin and can be difficult to diagnose.
2. CIV H3N2 - recently found in the United States. This virus is of avian origin and spread to 30 states by April 2016. This is the dog flu most of us are hearing about today. Unlike the human flu, canine influenza is not seasonal.

Can humans contract canine influenza?

No. Neither virus is infectious to humans.

Is canine influenza deadly?

Thankfully, most dogs who get the virus do not die. But it can lead to a more serious illness such as pneumonia. Puppies and senior dogs are more likely to become more seriously ill once they are infected.

What are the clinical signs of canine influenza?

Most cases of canine influenza are mild. However, up to 20% of infected dogs will have moderate to severe illness. The common clinical signs of canine influenza are:

- Coughing and retching
- Sneezing
- Nasal and/or ocular discharge
- Decreased appetite
- Lethargy

In some cases, dogs may run a fever and demonstrate signs of depression. High fever and pneumonia may be seen in more severe cases. These clinical signs can last from a few days to several weeks depending on the severity of the disease.



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How is canine influenza spread?

Canine influenza spreads the same way as the common cold in humans. Canine influenza viruses are most commonly spread through:

- Direct dog contact: sniffing, licking, nuzzling
- The air: coughing and sneezing
- Contaminated surfaces: sharing water bowls or toys
- Contaminated humans: with viruses on their hands or clothing

Where could a dog catch canine influenza?

The more a dog socializes with other dogs, the higher the risk of contracting canine influenza and other infectious respiratory diseases.

Are certain dogs at greater risk for infection?

Any dog can be at risk for canine influenza regardless of age, sex, or breed. However, certain activities can raise a dog's risk of infection. For general assessments for a dog's risk, does the dog:

- Visit doggie day care?
- Board at a boarding facility or pet hotel?
- Attend training classes?
- Play at dog parks?
- Participate in dog-friendly events?
- Attend dog shows or sporting events?
- Visit a groomer or the local pet store?
- Often greet other dogs during walks?

A "yes" answer to one or more of these questions could mean a higher risk for canine influenza as well as other respiratory disease.

What is the best way to prevent canine influenza?

Education. Talk to your trusted local veterinarian, the best source of information about preventive measures such as vaccination, disinfecting, and isolation. If a dog coughs or shows other signs of respiratory disease, be sure to contact your veterinarian immediately.

Should pet boarding facilities or doggy daycares require canine influenza vaccinations for the pets in their care?

We know this is a decision many pet care services providers are currently debating. Conscientious pet care facility owners take the policy decision to require vaccinations - or not- because they don't want to contribute to the spread of the disease should a dog carrying the disease without symptoms come in. At the same time, they are very much aware that whether a vaccine is appropriate - or not - for an individual pet is based on the pet's age, overall medical condition, and other factors that can only be addressed by the pet's personal veterinarian.

*To be able to answer the concerns and questions of smart pet owners, get educated.
Know your dog flu facts.*

Pet care facility owners should educate themselves on canine influenza. Speak with your trusted local veterinarian to get the facts for risk in your area and the best course of action for your particular business to take. Many facilities will implement a policy to require vaccinations, while many will leave it in the hands of the pet owner to decide about their pet in conjunction with their personal veterinarian. In either case, the facility owner should be educated on the dangers of canine influenza, be able to share knowledge with pet owners, and encourage pet owners to speak with their veterinarian to determine what's best for their pet.