

FACTS ABOUT CANINE INFLUENZA

Canine influenza is a contagious respiratory disease in dogs. It is an influenza A H3N8 virus that was originally an equine influenza virus. This virus spread to dogs and now can spread between dogs. Canine influenza virus can be spread by direct contact with respiratory secretions from infected dogs, by contact with contaminated objects, and by people moving between infected and uninfected dogs. There has been no evidence of transmission of canine influenza virus from dogs to people and there has not been a reported case of human infection with the canine influenza virus.

The incubation period is usually 2-4 days from exposure to onset of clinical signs. Virtually all dogs that are exposed become infected with the virus. About 80% of dogs will develop clinical signs of the disease. The approximately 20% of infected dogs that do not exhibit clinical signs can still shed the virus and spread the infection. The symptoms of canine influenza in dogs are cough, runny nose, and fever. Secondary bacterial infections can contribute to the nasal discharge and coughing. The cough can persist for 10-21 days despite treatment with antibiotics and cough suppressants. A small portion of dogs can develop severe disease characterized by pneumonia. The number of dogs infected with this disease that die is very small.

Canine influenza cannot be diagnosed solely by clinical signs because the clinical signs are similar to those associated with all of the other respiratory pathogens. We can test for canine influenza by collecting respiratory secretions at the time of disease onset or by collecting two blood samples; the first collected while the animal is sick and the second 2-3 weeks later.

Treatment consists largely of supportive care. This care may include medication to make your dog more comfortable and fluids to ensure that your dog remains well hydrated. Broad spectrum antibiotics may be prescribed by your veterinarian if a secondary bacterial infection is suspected.

There is an approved vaccine available. This vaccine is intended as an aid in the control of disease associated with canine influenza. The vaccine may not prevent infection, but it can reduce the severity and duration of the illness. The vaccine is intended to protect dogs that either participate in activities with many other dogs (grooming, day care, or dog parks) or are housed or boarded in a kennel environment. Kipling Veterinary Hospital and Wellness Center does not yet carry this vaccine as we are monitoring the vaccine efficacy. We do not yet know if there are any side effects or reaction possibilities from this vaccine. If we determine this vaccine is safe, we may start offering it to dogs that are at risk for developing this disease.