

# Protecting Your Dog From Canine Influenza

## PVMA FACT SHEET

Canine influenza virus (CIV), or H3N8, is a highly-contagious infection first noticed in racing greyhounds at a track in Florida in January 2004. Originally affecting only horses, the virus mutated and spread to dogs. The virus continued to pop up at racetracks across the country and now is prevalent in several states including Pennsylvania.

### How Is It Spread?

Like many viruses, canine influenza is spread through respiratory secretions and contaminated surfaces of everything from food and water bowls to leashes to toys. What's more, it can stay alive up to 48 hours on surfaces, 24 hours on clothing, and up to 12 hours on hands.

If a dog comes in contact with the virus, it can be 2-4 days before it exhibits signs of feeling ill, and the dog is also most contagious during this time. All dogs regardless of breed, size, or age can contract the virus, and nearly all dogs who are exposed to it—80%—will come down with it. Because the virus is relatively new in dogs, most have no immunity to it. The virus cannot be passed to humans.

### What Are the Symptoms?

The virus infects the respiratory tract from the nasal lining through the airways. Most dogs exhibit mild symptoms including a cough that is commonly mistaken for kennel cough. The cough persists for 10-21 days and most dogs exhibit a soft, moist cough. Many dogs also exhibit a pus-like nasal discharge and a low grade fever. The nasal discharge is usually the result of a secondary bacterial infection. Some dogs are more severely affected with clinical signs of pneumonia with a very high fever and labored breathing.

### Treatment

Like with any virus, antibiotics and other drugs aren't effective. Supportive care including providing plenty of fresh food and water and keeping objects clean is normally enough to promote recovery. In those dogs who also develop a secondary bacterial infection, bactericidal antimicrobials are usually prescribed. Dogs who develop pneumonia will probably be hospitalized to receive fluids intravenously. A small number of dogs—1-5%—who develop a severe form of the virus will die.



### Vaccine

While there are two approved vaccines for canine influenza, it's not always recommended that every dog be vaccinated. The canine influenza vaccine is considered a "lifestyle vaccine" in that if your dog is not regularly exposed to a large number of other dogs in situations like kennels, racing, or dog shows, it probably isn't necessary. In regional areas with a high concentration of it however, veterinarians may recommend or even require that dogs be vaccinated.

### Prevention and Control

In boarding and shelter facilities, the virus seems to be easily killed by commonly used disinfectant solutions. Policies for disinfecting cages, bowls and other communal items between uses should be developed. Any dog who appears to display signs of respiratory disease or cough should be separated and quarantined for two weeks. For a family dog, consult your veterinarian to develop a course of action. If your dog is outwardly showing signs of the virus, speak to your veterinarian before taking your dog to their practice. They may not want your dog entering through the waiting area in case of infecting other dogs.

DON'T LET THIS HIGHLY-CONTAGIOUS DISEASE BE A DANGER TO YOUR PETS.



advancing animal welfare and human health while ensuring the vitality of the profession