

Pawsitive Press

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Canine Influenza 1
- Influenza Cont'd 2
- July 4th and Pets 3
- Coupons 4

Related Webpages:

Please visit the pages below for more information on Canine Influenza in Florida.

Canine Influenza

By: Dr. Vasse D.V.M.

Canine influenza, commonly referred to as “dog flu,” is a respiratory virus that is very contagious among dogs. There are two strains that have been noted in the United States so far. The H3N8 strain emerged in 2004 and is thought to have mutated from a strain that causes flu in horses. Outbreaks of this strain were mostly limited to racing greyhounds. The H3N2 strain came to the US in 2015, and most likely mutated from a bird flu virus in Asia. In March of 2015, H3N2 caused an outbreak in Chicago. Since then, thousands of dogs have been infected across the US.

We are particularly concerned about H3N2 at this time, as we have had a cluster of 28 cases in north and central Florida since June 1, with 2 confirmed cases in Pinellas County, as of June 24.

The influenza virus can be transmitted between dogs through direct contact. It can also be aerosolized – such as when a dog coughs, sneezes, or barks – and can actually travel 20 feet in this form, making dogs in close quarters especially vulnerable to infection. Transmission can be indirect, as well, via food



touched by infected dogs. Humans are actually one of the most common sources of indirect transmission; for example, if we come into contact with an infected dog, we can actually take viral particles home to our own dogs on our hands, clothing, and shoes. The virus is pretty hearty and can remain viable on surfaces (counters, shoes, etc.) for 48 hours, clothes for 24 hours, and hands for 12 hours. Luckily, the virus is easy to kill. Use of bleach or quaternary ammonia household cleaners (like Lysol) will kill the virus on contaminated surfaces. For clothing, a hot-water wash with bleach is recommended. Use of soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer will kill the virus on hands.

From the time dogs are infected, it usually takes them 2-4 days to develop disease. During this period, they are most contagious. They remain contagious for at least 7-10 days after clinical signs develop.

Cats can catch the H3N2 virus from dogs, but infection and clinical disease are less likely in this species, and there are very few reports of this occurring. There are no reports of H3N2 spreading to other species or to humans.

Dogs at greatest risk of infection are those with the greatest exposure to other dogs. Shelters, foster homes, kennels, dog shows, agility/obedience competitions, grooming parlors, dog parks, and vet clinics are all places where dogs can be exposed. Dogs are safest at home, but there is still minimal risk, because the virus can live on inanimate objects brought into the home.

Signs of canine influenza include coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, fever, lethargy, and decreased appetite. Some dogs will also develop vomiting and diarrhea, but this is less common. Twenty percent of infected dogs will not show any clinical signs at all. Among the 80% of dogs who do show signs, most will develop a mild form of the infection, which resembles a common cold. Some, however, will develop pneumonia and high fever, which requires hospitalization. The pneumonia is most likely from secondary bacterial infection, as the influenza virus compromises immunity



Influenza Cont'd

of the respiratory system. Most dogs recover in 2-3 weeks. Fatality rate is less than 10%.

There is a vaccine available for H3N2, and due to the current outbreak in Florida, the University of Florida has recommended that all healthy dogs be vaccinated. The vaccine is given in two parts, two weeks apart. Dogs are fully protected only after the booster (second vaccine) is given. Remember, however, that, like the human flu vaccine, protection is not 100%. Still, vaccinated dogs that do develop infection tend to get a milder illness for a shorter period of time. Note that vaccination for Bordetella, or for the other strain of canine influenza, H3N8, does not confer any immunity to the H3N2 flu.

Diagnosis of canine influenza involves collecting a blood sample and a nasal swab, the former to test for antibodies to the flu and the latter to test for specific H3N2 viral DNA. Many other respiratory pathogens and other diseases, like allergies, can mimic flu signs, so your vet will not be able to make a definitive diagnosis based on clinical signs alone. Dogs that test positive are most likely infected with flu, but negative results do not rule out infection 100%.

Treatment includes supportive care and antibiotics, for those pets suspected to have a secondary bacterial infection. Most pets

can be treated at home. Sicker pets, who need to be hospitalized, must be kept in an isolation ward to prevent the infection from spreading to other patients. As of 6/25/17, the only isolation ward in the area is at Blue Pearl in Tampa.

If your dog has signs of flu, give us a call, and we will tell you how to proceed based on your dog's clinical signs, medical history, and exposure. Most likely, we will instruct you to come to the clinic and call us from the car when you arrive. At this time, a veterinarian will come out to the car to take a temperature and assess clinical signs. If signs are mild, the patient can be sent home on antibiotics to prevent/treat secondary bacterial infection, as well as any additional needed supportive care. If signs are more severe, however, we may direct you to Blue Pearl.

Above all, don't panic! The Animal Hospital of Dunedin will keep you fully updated on all developments and any steps you can take to keep your pets healthy!



Animal Hospital
OF DUNEDIN
(727) 733-9351
www.ahofd.com

Here's a quick list of dog owner "DOs" and "DON'Ts" for Canine Influenza:



1. **DO** get all healthy dogs vaccinated for the canine influenza strain, H3N2. Remember, they are not fully protected until they have had their booster shot at 2 weeks. Also remember that, just like the human flu vaccine, protection is not 100%.
2. **DO** keep unvaccinated dogs at home. In fact, home is the safest place for all dogs right now, since vaccination is not 100%. Infection is still possible at home through contact with objects or individuals carrying viral particles, but it is unlikely.
3. **DO** wash hands with soap and water or cleanse hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after contact with any dogs.
4. **DO** call your veterinarian if your dog has signs of flu. **DON'T** go directly to the clinic without calling first; if you walk in, your dog could infect other dogs at the clinic.
5. If your dog is under treatment at home, **DON'T** take him outside the house/yard for 4 full weeks after the start of clinical signs; this will prevent spread of infection to other dogs in the neighborhood.
6. Most importantly, **DO** be cautious, but **DON'T** panic! **DO** feel free to call the Animal Hospital of Dunedin with any questions!

July 4th PET SAFETY TIPS

BROUGHT TO YOU BY  **DVMmultimedia™**
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DON'T FREAK OUT

Fireworks explosions are loud and frightening to pets. Keep them secured in a quiet room during the displays.



TAKE A CHILL PILL

Some pets need help to ease the stress of fireworks. Talk to your vet about products and medications that can help.



PARTY ANIMAL

BBQs and gatherings are fun for us, but pose problems for pets. Keep alcohol and foods out of paw's reach.



STAY COOL

It can get hot outside and the festivities can be distracting. Make sure your pet has plenty of water and shade.



MICROCHIP

More pets get lost on 7/4 than any other day of the year. Microchip your pet and avoid the stress of a lost pet.

Animal Hospital of Dunedin
 1355 Pinehurst Rd
 Dunedin, FL 34698

Phone: 727-733-9351
Fax: 727-733-8165
E-mail:
animalhospitalofdunedin@gmail.com



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 love and kindness since
 1977”



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\$1

\$1 First Exam - New Patient

(\$49-\$80 Savings)

Includes comprehensive physical exam and one vaccine. Does not include 3yr Rabies vaccine or Holistic/Acupuncture appointments. Must be presented at the time of purchase. Coupon may not be combined with any other offer.

NL



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-10%

10% Off Dental Cleaning

(Call for an appointment today 727-733-9351)

Discount applies to anesthesia, prophylaxis, and any other dental radiographs or extractions that might be needed. Offer excludes required pre-dental labwork. May not be combined with any other coupons or discounts. Must be presented at the time of purchase.

Expires 7.31.17 NL



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Caring for Pets with Love and Kindness

\$10 Off

\$200 Retail Mix and Match

- *Shampoo
- *Food
- *Heartworm Prevention
- *Dietary Supplements
- *Flea and Tick Control

Coupon must be presented at the time of purchase. May not be combined with any other offer.

This coupon can not be applied to prescription medications other than heartworm/flea control

Expires 7.31.17 NL