

Canine Influenza

1. Canine Influenza (H3N8) is a novel canine virus first identified several years ago in groups of racing dogs in Florida. Although the virus has spread to 30 states, it is still not common in most pets.
2. It appears to be more of a problem in a few isolated areas of the country and in shelters and kennels where dogs are housed closely together. Although all dogs are at risk, most cases have been found associated with these situations.
3. The Canine Influenza Virus (CIV) is a different virus than the avian or human flu and it has not infected any humans.
4. The virus apparently mutated from an equine strain of influenza. Influenza viruses can mutate. While rare, we do seem to be seeing more of such mutations. Five different mutations were needed to make this particular species jump from the horse to the dog.
5. Canine Influenza is deadly to about 5% of dog infected with the disease. In addition, when the flu is diagnosed in a shelter, they are likely to euthanize all dogs in order to stop the spread of the virus.
6. Consequently, the total mortality rate is about 8%, four times the mortality rate of the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic in humans, a significant fact!
7. The primary symptoms in a dog are a cough and a high fever. If you see any such symptoms you should visit your veterinarian. It is important to know that there are many less severe diseases that show similar symptoms.
8. Currently the treatments we have are supportive care and antibiotics, even if a dog gets this flu virus, it is most likely it will recover with good care from your veterinary hospital.
9. A new vaccine for Canine Influenza Virus (CIV) has been given conditional status by the USDA. The vaccine will be available to veterinarians while the USDA continues to review data provided by the manufacturer.
10. The vaccine is an inactivated virus and helps to reduce the incidence of the symptoms and aids in control of the disease.
11. The virus is not thought to be contagious to humans or other animals. Most flu viruses are very species specific.

12. There is no quick diagnostic test that can be run as of now. However, veterinarians can send blood samples to a diagnostic lab if a diagnosis is needed.

13. Veterinarians are best suited to care for your pet and prevent disease. All precautions necessary are taken in animal hospitals to prevent spread of any infectious disease. So don't be afraid to take your dog to the veterinarian.

14. Prevention is best done by avoiding unnecessary contact with other dogs especially if your dog is old, young or has a compromised immune system. Fortunately most dogs are not at high risk of becoming sick.

15. Influenza viruses have taken various up and down cycles throughout history. The CDC is monitoring this disease carefully.

16. It is not necessary to keep your dogs inside. Remember, it is very unlikely your dog will be exposed to this disease. Normal precautions and the advice of your veterinarian will help you prevent any exposure to this disease.

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