

Recently, we've been receiving questions from some of our pet owners about a new dog virus called canine influenza. They were concerned about stories they had seen or read in the news about "dog flu" outbreaks. In answering their questions, we realized that all of our dog owners may have similar questions and concerns. So, we're writing to tell you about canine influenza, what puts dogs at risk and what can be done to protect them. Canine influenza is a relatively new disease and can be caused by two different canine influenza virus strains, H3N8 and H3N2. Both strains of canine influenza virus cause respiratory disease in dogs. Affected dogs may develop coughing, nasal discharge, fever, lethargy and loss of appetite. The signs of infection are similar to those of other respiratory diseases in dogs. With proper medical attention, most dogs will recover. However, in some cases, canine influenza can progress to a more severe or even life-threatening condition, such as pneumonia.

Canine influenza is highly contagious, so visiting places where dogs socialize or congregate, such as doggie day cares, dog parks, boarding facilities and groomers, places dogs at higher risk for becoming infected. Making the situation even more difficult to control is that dogs can spread the virus before signs of illness appear.

The best way to protect your dog from canine influenza is through vaccination. Fortunately, there are vaccines now available for each canine influenza strain, H3N8 and H2N2. The initial vaccination requires two doses of the vaccine, given 3 weeks apart. Thereafter, an annual booster for each influenza strain is recommended for continued protection. We recommend vaccinating dogs against both canine influenza H3N8 and H3N2 and have vaccines available. Please call us to discuss any questions you might have and to set up an appointment.