

2016 Update on second emerging US Canine Influenza epidemic



Do you have a dog that is exposed to other dogs during boarding, grooming, daycare, showing or other activities that you both enjoy? Then you'll want to be sure you are familiar with the current status of Canine Influenza Virus in our area.



- A new Canine Influenza Virus (CIV H3N2) is causing respiratory disease in dogs, not related to the old Canine Influenza Virus (CIV H3N8).
- It is not covered by the standard Canine Influenza Virus vaccine (CIV H3N8).
- There is a new vaccine available, and we are recommending it for dogs that board, show, go to dog daycare, or spend time with lots of other dogs.
- We are not currently requiring it of all dogs that board at our kennel, but that will change when the first case occurs in Montgomery County.
- The new CIV virus can cause 3 weeks' duration of coughing and require a month of isolation from other dogs, which can disrupt plans.

As most of you know, an outbreak of Canine Influenza H3N8 occurred in 2004 as a result of mutation of a virus previously only affecting horses. Racing greyhounds in Florida were the first dogs affected, and many dogs died from pneumonia.

The infection has spread throughout most states now, with Montgomery County, Maryland seeing its first outbreak in the summer of 2013. A vaccine has been available for CIV H3N8 since 2009, and we began aggressively vaccinating dogs at risk in our area in 2013, when it became evident that the virus had reached Maryland.

Today, there is a new Canine Influenza Virus, CIV H3N2, that first presented to the US in Chicago. This virus is not a mutation of CIV H3N8, but an avian influenza introduced to the US from Asia (Korea, China and Thailand), where it has been causing respiratory disease in dogs since 2006. The first outbreak of CIV H3N2 occurred in Chicago in March 2015, and hit Maryland this summer, although it has not yet been documented in Montgomery County.

With either type of Canine Influenza Virus, virtually all exposed dogs will be infected, with 80% showing signs of respiratory disease (coughing, fever, sneezing, runny eyes and nose). The fatality rate has been as high as 10%, with greyhounds and debilitated dogs having the highest fatality likelihood. In dogs that survive, coughing can last for up to 21 days, and, in the case of CIV H3N2 (the newer virus), they can be contagious for up to 28 days.

It is not known at this time whether the older vaccine for CIV H3N8 offers any protection for CIV H3N2 but since many of its Chicago victims were previously vaccinated against CIV H3N8, and still had respiratory disease, it appears not to offer much, if any, protection.

In November 2015, a vaccine was introduced for this new Canine Influenza, CIV H3N2. Like the vaccine for CIV H3N8, it requires an initial two doses, 3 weeks apart, followed by an annual single booster. At this time, there is no combination vaccine although it seems likely that will be the case in the near future, perhaps in 2-3 years. Note that the Canine Influenza Virus is not the same as the Human

Influenza Virus, for which minor mutations result in the formulation of a specific serum for each flu season. Neither the CIV H3N8 nor the CIV H3N2 has changed in the years that it has been followed so as to render the vaccines made for them obsolete. Note also that humans and cats are NOT affected by either Canine Influenza virus.

As with any biological agent, the decision whether or not to vaccinate your dog is based on a discussion with your veterinary team taking into account the relative risk of exposure, the risk of severe or prolonged illness, the possibility of extensive time disqualified from work, shows and competition due to month-long isolation should exposure occur, and financial considerations. Our experience with the older CIV H3N8 vaccine over the past few years has been very good-the vaccine is extremely well tolerated. We anticipate a similar experience with the new CIV H3N2 vaccine, and thousands of dogs have already been vaccinated, nationwide. So far, both the safety and efficacy of these vaccines have been reported to be very good.

We are now beginning to vaccinate our patients with the new Canine Influenza vaccine. If you feel that your dog may be at risk for exposure, please call the office.