



CANINE INFLUENZA

What You Should Know and How You Can Help Protect Your Pets

Canine Influenza has been a common topic world-wide over the past few years, and is becoming a popular local topic recently. There are two strains of the dog flu that have been found to cause concern for respiratory infections in dogs: H3N8 and H3N2. The H3N8 strain has been in the United States since 2004, and has been confirmed in Arizona over the years. The symptoms of the H3N8 infection have been less concerning than the newer H3N2 strain. The newest and more severe strain, H3N2, emerged in Chicago in March of 2015, and rapidly spread to more than 19 states in only a few months. We as pet owners need to take the proper precautions to ensure the safety of our furry loved ones and prevent the spread of this serious infection to our area. With Arizona being a popular winter destination, and the rise in travel and pet boarding around the holidays, we do anticipate this highly contagious dog flu to spread rapidly through Phoenix and the surrounding areas.

Does your dog frequent any of these places?

- **Boarding Facilities**
- **Grooming Facilities**
- **Dog Parks**
- **Pet Stores**
- **Play Dates with other Pets**
- **Training Programs**
- **Travel to other States or Countries**

Your dog should be vaccinated against Canine Influenza!!

Brachycephalic breed dogs are affected more severely by respiratory diseases, and should also be vaccinated as a precaution. We are now highly recommending the H3N2 vaccination for all boarding and grooming services at our hospital. We highly recommend vaccinating your dogs against both canine influenzas and other contagious diseases to give your beloved pets the best possible protection. Just as with human flu vaccinations, the dog flu vaccine does not guarantee protection, but greatly boosts their immunity and protection against this virus.

What Can We Do to Prevent the Spread of Canine Influenza? How Can Your Dog Get the Flu?

Here at GQvet, it is our goal to provide a clean and sanitized facility for all of our boarding, hospitalized, and grooming pets. We ensure pets showing symptoms of contagious diseases are isolated immediately to protect healthy pets visiting our facility. This protocol, however, may not be enough to prevent an outbreak, as pets infected with the dog flu are contagious before they start displaying symptoms. Vaccinating will help provide protection to your beloved pets. This virus is transmitted between dogs via aerosolized respiratory secretions from coughing, barking and sneezing. The virus can also live on contaminated objects such as boarding facility surfaces, food and water bowls, collars and leashes, blankets, as well as people moving between infected and uninfected dogs. The virus can remain viable (alive and able to infect) on surfaces for up to 48 hours, on clothing for 24 hours, and on hands for up to 12 hours.

Vaccination Administration:

It is recommended by the vaccine manufacturers as well as the doctors at Cornell University to vaccinate your pet against both the H3N8 and the H3N2 Canine Influenza strains to ensure the optimum protection of your pet. Both vaccines should be given under the supervision of a veterinarian, and booster vaccinations should be administered 3 weeks after the initial vaccines. Your pet is considered as protected as possible two weeks after the booster vaccinations are administered. Flu Vaccines should then be repeated annually after the initial vaccinations for maximum protection.

Symptoms of Canine Influenza

The clinical symptoms of Canine Influenza are very similar to kennel cough, and can include a dry or moist cough, sneezing, nasal discharge, ocular discharge, lethargy, and/or reduced appetite. Symptoms generally related to a secondary infection can include purulent nasal discharge, high fever, or coughing up blood.

How Long Is My Pet Contagious to Others If Infected with Canine Influenza?

From the time of exposure, to onset of clinical signs, the incubation period is usually two to four days. The highest amounts of viral shedding occur during this time; therefore, dogs are most contagious during the 2-to-4-day incubation period when they are NOT exhibiting signs of illness. Shedding of the virus can continue for up to 7 to 10 days in most dogs with H3N8 canine influenza. The more severe H3N2 influenza can shed for up to 24 days, much longer than the H3N8 flu.

Are Certain Pets More Susceptible to Infection Than Others?

It is believed that all dogs that are exposed do become infected with the virus, however only about 80% show clinical symptoms. The other 20% of non-symptomatic dogs can still shed the virus and can spread the infection.

Although it is believed that hound breeds are more severely affected by this infection, it is proven that all dogs, regardless of breed or age, are considered highly susceptible to canine influenza infection and have no immunity when first exposed to this newly emerged virus.

Due to this, if this virus was to present in a boarding facility, kennel, or play group, we can conclude that the majority of the dogs will become infected, and most of these dogs will show symptoms. Although most dogs have a milder form of canine influenza and recover without complications, some can develop secondary infections or severe pneumonia. The inflammation from this virus can also cause permanent scar tissue to the respiratory system.

H3N2 has been found in cats, however to date no cats in the United States have tested positive, and there are no influenza vaccinations currently available for cats. H3N2 has not been found in people, and is not believed to be transmissible to humans.

Diagnosis & Treatment

Canine Influenza infection can be diagnosed by outside laboratories, and depending on the stage of the pet's sickness there are two different tests available. For a pet that has been showing clinical symptoms for less than 3 days, a nasal swab can be performed and sent to an outside lab. Results can be reported for this test in 3 to 5 days. For pets that have been symptomatic for more than 3 days, a blood serum sample can be tested and will determine the presence of antibodies to the different influenza strains; results for this test are reported in 5 to 7 days.

As Canine Influenza is a virus, and there are no antiviral drugs approved for use against this virus, treatment is predominately by supportive care. Antibiotics may be prescribed to treat potential secondary infections. Fluids and nutritional therapy may be necessary to prevent or treat dehydration, and many pets suffering from Canine Influenza must be hospitalized for this treatment. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications are often used to reduce fever and inflammation. Immune system support supplements and cough suppressants may also be used to aid in the healing and comfort of the pet. Sick or exposed dogs should be isolated for 2 to 3 weeks, and proper sanitation protocols should be followed while handling these pets.

The Gilbert Queen Creek Emergency Veterinarian is here to serve all of your pet's health care needs. Our courteous staff knows that your pet is a family member and we strive to make them feel at home in our warm, caring environment. All of our patients are treated as if they were one of our own. Your pet's health and well-being are our priority. With this in mind, we offer only the best care for your pet.

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