

Canine Influenza Guidelines for Dog Businesses

Canine influenza is a highly contagious respiratory disease that infects dogs of all breeds and ages. This document provides more information about the disease as well as general guidelines for dog day-cares, training centers, groomers, and other dog serving businesses to help keep dogs safe and prevent community spread. Contact your veterinarian for specific recommendations and medical advice.

What is Canine Influenza Virus (CIV)?

CIV is an influenza A virus that primarily infects dogs. There are two different types of CIV: H3N8 and H3N2. Both virus types originated in other species, horses and birds, and evolved over time to infect dogs. These viruses are now considered specific to dogs, although cats can rarely become infected with H3N2. No human infections of CIV have ever been reported worldwide, and CIV is considered a low threat to people.

How does CIV spread?

CIV is spread in respiratory droplets and can travel up to four feet in the air. Direct dog-to-dog contact is the most common way the disease is transmitted. The virus can, however, remain infectious on contaminated surfaces such as floors, walls, toys, bowls, grass/leaves, clothing, and skin for up to 48 hours.

An infected dog spreads the virus through eye and nose discharge and by coughing or sneezing. When an uninfected dog contacts the virus, it can enter through the nose, eyes, or mouth and cause infection. Dogs can continue to shed the virus for as long as 30 days after infection, even after they no longer appear to be sick.

What are the signs of CIV infection?

Most dogs develop signs of illness within 2-4 days of becoming infected with CIV. Signs can appear suddenly, and a dog that appeared healthy in the morning may show signs in the afternoon. Signs of canine influenza are:

- Cough
- Fever
- Runny eyes or nose
- Shortness of breath
- Hard swallowing or excessive throat clearing
- Lethargy
- Decrease in appetite and water consumption

Many dogs experience mild to moderate symptoms and recover within 2-3 weeks. Some dogs may experience more serious infection resulting in pneumonia and possibly death. The virus also can allow the normal bacteria of the throat and lungs to overgrow and cause secondary infections that can make clinical signs worse.

How is CIV infection treated?

The treatment for canine influenza is supportive care (maintaining hydration and nutritional needs, managing fever). Antibiotics may be prescribed if there is evidence of secondary bacterial infection. There is no direct treatment for CIV itself.

Are there vaccines against CIV?

There are commercially available vaccines against canine influenza. Vaccination may not prevent infection in every dog, but those that are vaccinated and get sick have less severe symptoms, recover more quickly, and are less infectious to other dogs.

Is there a test for CIV?

Testing to confirm CIV infection is available and can help stop the spread of the disease through the community. The Board of Animal Health requires any dog that tests positive for CIV to stay at home for 30 days to prevent other animals from getting sick.

What can be done to help stop the spread of CIV?

Sick dogs

- Direct staff to be on alert for clinical signs.
- Immediately separate symptomatic dogs from others and contact your consulting veterinarian.
- Any dog showing signs of respiratory disease should immediately be sent home and not allowed to return to the facility for 30 days. Even a dog that appears to have recovered can continue to shed infectious virus for 30 days.
- Limit the number of staff interacting with dogs showing clinical signs and do not allow those staff to interact with healthy pets
- Staff should wear PPE while caring for sick dogs- isolation gowns or clothing coverings, gloves, shoe coverings. Once finished, staff should wash their hands and remove PPE or change clothes as soon as possible.
- Notify the owners of all animals present of the potential exposure.

While dogs are at your facility

- Prevent or limit interactions between dogs from different households; keep dogs 6 feet apart if possible.
- Decrease the size of play groups and keep group members consistent to limit the number of different dog exposures.

- Dedicate spaces, tools, and other items (bowls, leashes, bedding, etc.) to individual dogs and do not rotate between dogs without cleaning and disinfecting.
- If possible, assign staff to only work with specific dogs or specific groups of dogs. Have staff wash hands and clean or change clothes between interactions with each dog. If possible, groomers should change smocks between dogs.

Cleaning and disinfection

- Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfection throughout the day, and clean thoroughly at the end of each business day.
- Most common disinfectants kill CIV. Be sure to check labels for indications and observe proper dilution instructions and contact times.
- Before applying a disinfectant, clean all organic matter (urine, feces, food, etc.) with soap and water. Organic material often inactivates disinfectants making them ineffective against CIV.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces, kennels, and other areas between dogs and dog groups.

Animal Shelters and Rescue Groups

- If possible, limit importing dogs from areas with known CIV outbreaks.
- Quarantine new dogs for 7 days after admission.
- Limit the number of public activities that each dog participates in and do not allow dogs in the rescue/shelter to interact with dogs outside of the organization.
- Any dog with signs of respiratory illness should be examined by a veterinarian and tested for CIV.
- All dogs with respiratory illness should be isolated from other animals for 30 days, even without a positive CIV test.