

Canine Influenza Guidelines for Dog Owners

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 to help keep your dog 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. Contact your veterinarian if your dog is showing any of the following:

- 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. The decision to vaccinate against CIV should be made in consultation with your veterinarian.

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. Your veterinarian will determine if testing is indicated.

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

The following are recommendations to help stop the spread of canine influenza and keep dogs healthy.

- Keep sick dogs and dogs known to have had contact with infected dogs home and isolated from other animals for 30 days.
- Contact your veterinarian as soon as possible if your dog is sick.
- Avoid direct dog-to-dog contact with dogs outside of your household and dogs showing signs of respiratory illness.
- Consider avoiding dog parks and other locations with uncontrolled dog-to-dog contact.
- Keep your distance (6 feet) at places where dogs congregate like dog parks and while on walks with your dog.
- If your dog is sick or you have contact with dogs outside of your household, wash your hands and change clothes before interacting with other animals.
- Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces and items frequently. Clean all organic material (urine, feces, food pieces, etc.) using soap and water before applying the disinfectant. Common household disinfectants such as Lysol are effective against CIV. Be sure to follow all label directions.