



# CANINE FLU

Canine Influenza (Canine Flu) is a new disease, first identified in 2004, caused by the H3N8 Canine Influenza Virus. The virus is easily spread by aerosol (coughing, sneezing), direct contact, and fomites (hands, clothing, environment). Like the flu in people, most exposed dogs will develop disease, since there is not immunity in the general population. Also like the human flu, most cases are not severe and most recover without treatment. The disease has been reported in 30+ states (including Virginia and Washington, DC), but there have been no confirmed cases in Maryland.

## Symptoms

The symptoms of Canine Influenza are similar to “kennel cough” caused by other organisms: cough, mild fever, nasal discharge, decreased appetite. More severe cases may show higher fever and secondary pneumonia. Only specific virus testing can determine if the infection is Canine Influenza or another respiratory infection.

## Disease Transmission

The virus can be shed by an infected individual 2-5 days after exposure and clinical signs develop 5-7 days after exposure. This means that most dogs can shed and spread the virus before it is evident that they are “sick”. Dogs stop shedding virus after about the 10<sup>th</sup> day, even though the cough may last 2-4 weeks.

## Treatment

1. Mild cases usually do not require treatment. Infected dogs should be isolated from other dogs and offered supportive care: rest, nutrition, etc.
2. More severe cases involve supportive care (hydration, nutrition) and treatment of secondary bacterial infection with antibiotics.
3. Human antiviral drugs (Tamiflu) are not recommended or proven effective in Canine Influenza.

## Prevention

As with human flu, avoiding of infected individuals is the best prevention. For the average dog, the risk of exposure is very low, particularly since we have thus far had no outbreaks in the immediate area. However, any place that dogs congregate, the risk increases. This includes boarding and daycare facilities, grooming facilities and dog parks, and veterinary offices. While none of these establishments would knowingly house an infected dog, the concern is the early infected individual who is shedding the virus before appearing sick.

### Vaccination

In July 2009 a vaccine became available for Canine Influenza. Some points to remember:

1. The initial vaccination series is 2 vaccines given 3 weeks apart, best if given at least 8-12 days prior to exposure. Thus the series should be completed about 2 weeks prior to boarding. A single booster is given yearly thereafter.
2. According to the manufacturer, the vaccine is "*Proven to significantly reduce the clinical signs, severity, and spread of canine influenza infection*". This means that vaccinated dogs can still get the disease and spread the disease, but generally do not get as sick for as long as non-vaccinated dogs.
3. The vaccine has been shown to be safe, with no more risk of reaction or side effects than other routine vaccines.

### Recommendations

At this time, the veterinarians at Kenwood Animal Hospital are *recommending* but not *requiring* vaccination for Canine Influenza for dogs in our boarding, day care, grooming and hospital facilities. This recommendation may change to a requirement if the disease becomes more prevalent locally. We do not recommend it as a "core" vaccine for all dogs.

If you have any questions about Canine Influenza and the Canine Influenza Vaccine, please see any of the veterinarians at **Kenwood Animal Hospital**.

### **Kenwood Animal Hospital**

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