

Canine Influenza

The canine influenza virus, H3 N8, is a highly contagious respiratory virus of dogs. Canine influenza was first recognized in January 2004 at a greyhound racing track in Florida. **To date, there have been only two confirmed cases of canine influenza in Oregon.** The disease is very easily transmitted dog to dog but there is no evidence that it can be transmitted to humans. The primary route of transmission between dogs is via aerosolized respiratory secretions, contaminated objects and people. In the environment the virus can remain active from 12 to 48 hours.

Canine influenza causes symptoms that often look just like kennel cough in the early stages of illness. Canine Influenza however, seems to be even more contagious than kennel cough and can potentially lead to very serious illness. Nearly all dogs exposed to the virus become infected and most dogs infected with the virus will exhibit mild symptoms. A soft, moist cough is common however, some dogs will have a dry cough similar to kennel cough. Some dogs are more severely affected having a colored nasal discharge and fever. In a small number of dogs pneumonia and high fever are seen. It is a disease that mostly affects dogs in confined locations such as kennels and shelters and presently seems to be predominant in “hot spots” of the country such as Florida, Colorado, New York and Pennsylvania.

Similar to all viral diseases, canine influenza is treated with predominantly supportive care. Good nursing care, husbandry and nutrition, together with isolation of infected individuals are all used when an outbreak is noted. Many dogs respond with no treatment and others require hospitalization and medications.

Presently, there is a vaccine available for the canine influenza virus. Similar to all vaccines, the decision to vaccinate is based on a number of criteria. Potential risk of contracting the disease, seriousness of the disease, and the risk of vaccinating are all considered prior to administering a vaccine. Based on the present low risk to dogs in the Portland metro area to canine influenza, the Parkway Veterinary Hospital is not routinely vaccinating for this disease.

If you are concerned that your pet may be at risk for canine influenza or if you have more questions about vaccinating, please ask one of our doctors or visit one of the websites linked in our pet links section on our home page.