

## **Canine Influenza Virus (type A H3N8)**

### **An emerging canine respiratory disease threat**

A new respiratory viral disease, Canine Influenza Virus (CIV), aka "Dog Flu", was identified here in the USA as the cause of respiratory disease outbreaks in greyhounds at 20 different race tracks in eight states from 2003 to 2005. During that time it spread to many different facilities that housed dogs, such as animal shelters, kennels and veterinary hospitals. The virus has been identified again in 2009 in outbreaks of respiratory illness in dogs. CIV does not infect people.

**Prevalence:** Laboratory testing and surveillance has now identified thousands of dogs in 30 states and the District of Columbia with confirmed CIV infections. The virus is now established in communities in the states of Colorado, Florida, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York.

**Source of infection:** CIV originated from the interspecies transmission of the equine influenza (H3N6 virus) from horses to dogs sometime prior to 2004.

**Risk:** Since this is a new infectious agent for dogs they have no natural immunity. An individual dog's risk is dependent on its lifestyle. The highest risk groups are dogs housed in kennels, pet shops, shelters and rescue groups, and those going to daycare, dog parks, dog shows/ competition trials, veterinary hospitals and grooming establishments.

**Signs/Symptoms:** Dogs of any age, breed, or health status are susceptible. Transmission is either by oro-nasal (mouth-nose) contact with infected dogs, contact with contaminated surfaces or by inhalation of aerosolized virus spread by infected dogs coughing and sneezing. Because it is highly contagious, virtually all exposed dogs become infected. Within 2 to 4 days of exposure approximately 80% of exposed dogs will shed the virus and suffer varying degrees of illness with signs including fever, coughing, sneezing and eye or nasal discharge. The cough can last for up to 3 weeks. The other 20% will have a subclinical infection with no signs of illness but will still shed the virus and therefore spread the infection to other dogs.

Most sick dogs recover without complications but approximately 1 in 5 dogs can develop a severe infection with pneumonia that can be life threatening. Currently, there has not been a confirmed CIV outbreak in Washington but it is possible via dogs travelling from affected areas.

**Vaccination:** A CIV vaccine has been approved by the USDA and is now available. It is reported that **the vaccine does not prevent the disease but can significantly shorten the duration of coughing and viral shedding and reduce the severity of the pneumonia.**

The CIV vaccine is administered to dogs that are 6 weeks and older. Two doses are given two to four weeks apart, followed by a booster once yearly, to be given to dogs considered at risk of exposure. One dose does not generate sufficient immunity, so two doses are initially required to provide protection. The vaccine has thus far been reported to be safe, with no side effects reported.

We are currently recommending vaccination for the dogs of our hospital staff to further evaluate for side effects. Due to the potential for serious illness and the extremely contagious nature of CIV in a highly susceptible canine population, we encourage you to consider vaccinating your dog(s) for CIV if their lifestyle puts them at risk of exposure. Examples of these lifestyles would be if you travel with your pet to areas where it has been found, if your dog has been at a kennel that had an outbreak of a respiratory disease, or if an outbreak of canine influenza is reported in Washington.

**Future Communication:** We will continue to monitor for any verifiable news of a CIV outbreak in Washington and report to you on our website ([www.elliottbayah.com](http://www.elliottbayah.com)). Should such an event occur, we will likely require that all boarding, day care and hospitalized dogs to be vaccinated for CIV.

Please call us at 206.285.7387 if you have questions or to schedule an appointment for the vaccine series.

**For additional information on Canine Influenza Virus, see the following links:**

**[www.doginfluenza.com](http://www.doginfluenza.com) and [www.avma.org/public\\_health/influenza/canine\\_bgnd.asp](http://www.avma.org/public_health/influenza/canine_bgnd.asp)**