

## Canine Influenza

Canine flu caused by the H3N8 Influenza virus was first discovered in Florida in 2004 in a group of greyhounds. It has since spread to most states in the United States.

Dogs at highest risk for contracting the virus are dogs exposed to enclosed areas containing many other dogs, such as breeding kennels, pet stores, humane shelters and boarding facilities.

Symptoms may mimic the well known condition “kennel cough” which is caused by Parainfluenza virus, Bordetella bacteria or a combination of both. In most cases it causes a cough, either harsh (like kennel cough) or a soft wet-sounding cough. In more severe cases it can also cause a high fever, pneumonia, and death. It can be complicated by secondary bacterial infection(s) as well. Some dogs may develop immunity to the virus without showing any symptoms, but those who do develop symptoms, it may last upwards of 30 days.

If a dog is suspected of having the virus, supportive care such as extra fluid intake is used. Any possible secondary bacterial infection is treated with appropriate antibiotics. Testing to confirm influenza is available through the major veterinary labs. Any dog suspected of or confirmed of having the virus should be isolated from other dogs for 30 days.

Canine influenza as of this article’s publication, has not been reported in Idaho. It has, however been reported in most of the surrounding states including: Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, Oregon and Washington.

The canine influenza virus is suspected to be a mutation of a similar horse influenza virus, but there is currently no risk of transmission to humans.

Vaccination for this virus is now available from Intervet. Just like a human child being vaccinated for one of the human viruses, a newly vaccinated dog receives 2 vaccine injections given 4 weeks apart, then a booster annually. The vaccine does not completely prevent infection, but according to Intervet “significantly decreases clinical signs of disease and reduces shedding...”.

Intermountain Pet Hospital offers and encourages the vaccine for all dogs in the above-mentioned risk categories. Vaccination can be given to dogs healthy enough for vaccination anytime after 6 weeks of age.