

CANINE FLU FACT SHEET



Canine influenza (dog flu) is an emerging virus that causes occasional outbreaks around the country and world. An outbreak in animal shelters in the Twin Cities in April 2023 resulted in a closure of three major shelters for a month. This fact sheet provides some basics on the disease.

What causes canine influenza (CI)?

Just like human influenza and other influenzas, the disease is caused by a virus.

How transmissible is it? Can it infect humans?

CI is extremely transmissible through the air. Sick dogs will cough or sneeze virus particles, which can be inhaled by other dogs to infect them. The virus can also survive on owners' clothes or objects in facilities (door knobs, surfaces) and infect dogs via contact.

The virus is currently **NOT** capable of jumping to humans.

What are the symptoms?

Most cases look like a human cold: runny nose, dry cough, mild fever, a bit lethargic. More serious cases can develop respiratory issues from pneumonia, leading to increased respiratory exertion and severe depression.

Does my dog need to be seen if it has symptoms?

We **ONLY** recommend a consultation if your dog has respiratory symptoms **AND** is not eating or drinking. Coughing can last for as long as two months after initial infection.

How are sick dogs diagnosed and treated?

A PCR test from a nasal swab can confirm likely infection, but cost is about \$175. Treatment is very much human flu patients... rest, ensure they are drinking to maintain hydration. Severe cases with respiratory impairment are provided supportive care with hospitalization, IV fluid therapy, and nasal oxygen. Human anti-viral medications are ineffective against CI.

Is there a vaccine?

Vaccines do exist, and they typically reduce the severity of disease (rather than prevent it). However, all manufacturers currently have backorders on the vaccine until fall 2023.

Can GAVC help if my dog needs to be hospitalized?

If your dog is severely ill, our facility is limited to being only able to provide IV fluid support. Dogs with severe respiratory impairment likely will need to be referred to a hospital in the Twin Cities for oxygen therapy.

How long is my dog infectious for?

The duration of virus shedding has been documented out to 28 days, so symptomatic animals in known outbreaks should not socialize with other dogs for at least one month. Furthermore, owners of infected dogs should be very cautious about interacting with other dogs so as not to spread the virus on their clothes or hands. Good hand-washing and clean changes of clothes can reduce spread.
